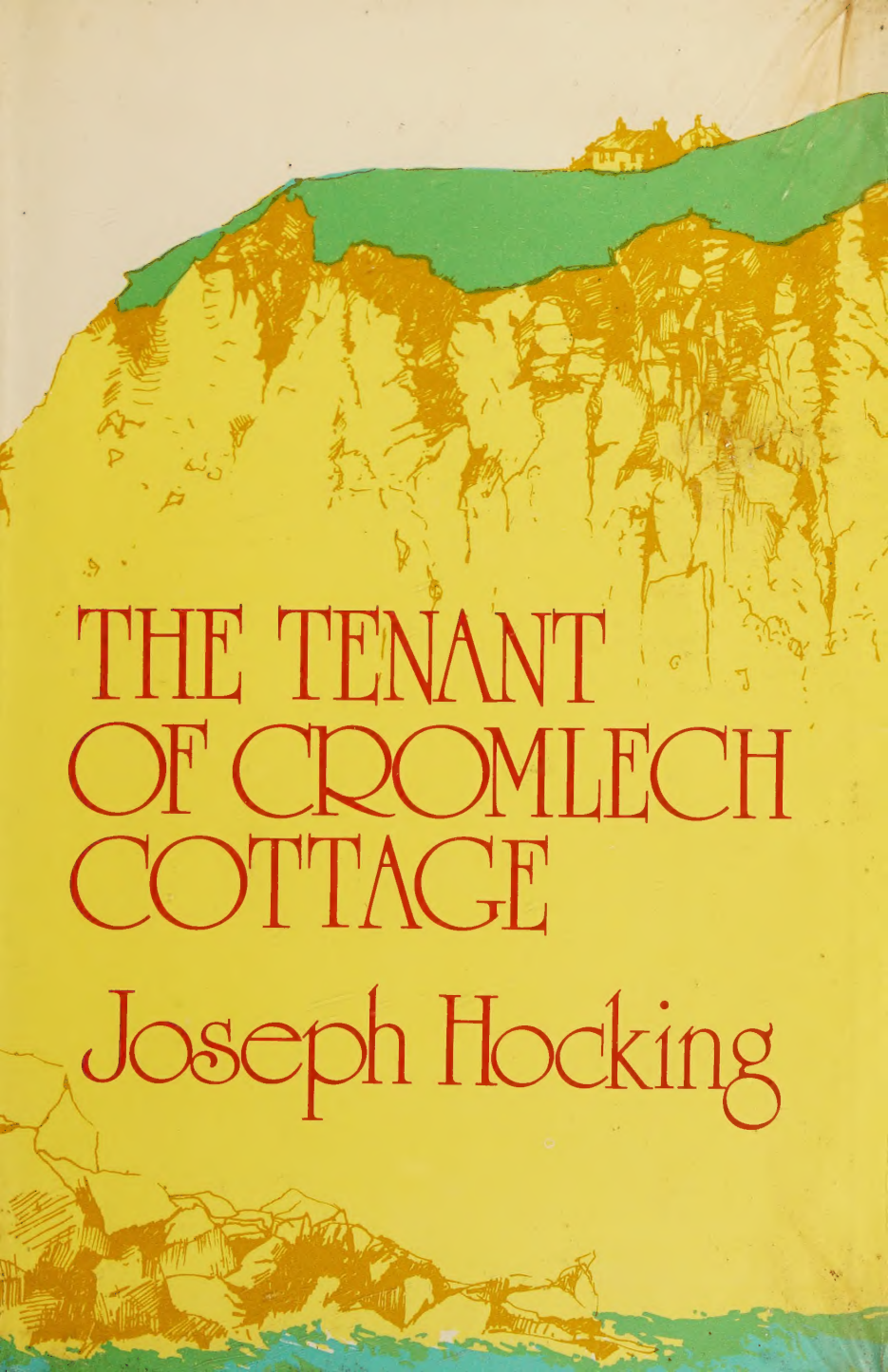
THE TENANT
OF CROMLECH
COTTAGE
Joseph Hocking

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THE TENANT OF CROMLECH COTTAGE

Ghost Stories move almost inevitably to one of two dénouements – a materialistic explanation or a supernatural. *The Tenant of Cromlech Cottage* has a surprise for the reader in that the physical explanation of the noises and movements that have disturbed the novelist owner of the haunted cottage – that these were occasioned by the nocturnal visits of two orphans who believed that a will was hidden there – was followed by the appearance of a dead man to tell the novelist where this missing will might be found. This dualism is typical of Joseph Hocking's Cornish stories where romance and realism make a blend as fascinating as it is unique.

THE TENANT OF CROMLECH COTTAGE

JOSEPH HOCKING

FICTION STORE
MORECAMBE

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AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

THE story of *The Tenant of Cromlech Cottage* which I am presenting to you is a romance of the West of England. It came to me in the following way:

Some time ago I was talking with a legal friend, and he was relating to me some curious cases appertaining to the law, especially some that had to do with Wills. Among others, he told me of one which gripped my imagination and appealed to me greatly. At first I turned it aside as too unbelievable to be true, especially those parts of it where the supernatural element was prominent, but, being assured that it formed a part of the legal lore of the West of England, I was more than ever impressed.

It is this story which forms the basis of *The Tenant of Cromlech Cottage.*

I am mentioning this in order that any reader who may be led to regard certain events as merely the outcome of a writer's imagination may know that those parts of the story which have to do with the Will are in all essentials what my friend related.

JOSEPH HOCKING.

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THE TENANT OF CROMLECH COTTAGE

CHAPTER I

GWITHIAN TREWITHEN

TO BE LET OR SOLD

Unique old-fashioned cottage, furnished or unfurnished. One large living-room. One smaller sitting-room. Four bedrooms. Good domestic offices. Perfect drainage. Thoroughly renovated and modernized. Good garden. Meadows if required. Garage. Ideal for those desiring rural peaceful country. Two miles from sea and post office. Great bargain if quick sale.

Apply Polkinhorne & Linkinhorne, Truro.

IT was the word Truro that attracted Gwithian Trewithen's attention. He had not been in Cornwall for many years, but being a Cornishman by birth and bearing an old Cornish name, the word Truro attracted him.

Gwithian Trewithen did not want a house either large or small, and housekeeping of any sort was utterly repugnant to him. Years before he had his dreams of a home in the country, with all that a home in the country meant. But those dreams had been shattered and all the hopes he had cherished concerning them cruelly destroyed. Why then should the advertisement of a house in Cornwall make any appeal to him?

He was sitting alone in a private room of a London hotel. Outside was the rush and roar of London traffic. It grated upon his ears, irritated his sensitive nerves, made him impatient, angry. Gwithian Trewithen was a soured, disappointed man. There was a wearied look in his eyes, a look which told of unsatisfied hopes and unfulfilled longings. Evidently, too, his health was far from good.

The reason for this was not far to seek. He had built the castle of his life on the sands of a fickle woman's promise, and he was now paying the penalty. Gwithian Trewithen was a mining engineer, and up to two years before had been only

moderately successful. Then he fell in love with a beautiful girl who professed to return his affection. He had loved her with all the ardour of his fervent Celtic nature ; had given himself to her completely, and no man was happier than he when he found that his affection was returned.

But difficulties had appeared. The young lady's parents were ambitious for their daughter's future and looked coldly on Gwithian's suit. How could it be otherwise ? It was true he bore a good old Cornish name, but that was nearly all. He had no money and no prospects. Although twenty-eight years of age he had done little or nothing with his life ; his talents, such as they were, had been largely frittered away. That was why when he had approached Michael Sowerby and asked his consent to an engagement with his daughter that he was met coldly. Michael Sowerby was a stock-broker, with social ambitions. He believed that his daughter Ursula could make a brilliant match. He had sent her to the best schools, he had lavished money on her in every direction. Why then should she throw herself away on this young mining engineer, when a young M.P. with hopes of a seat in the Cabinet paid her marked attentions. Wasn't his daughter sought after on every hand ?

But the girl was enamoured of Gwithian, and like most girls, she was impulsive, impetuous, and determined to have her own way. She said she would never love anyone else but Gwithian ; he was everything to her, and she threatened her father that if she could not marry him with his consent she would marry without it.

But Gwithian had a sense of honour. He felt that to an extent her father was right, and that it would be cowardly, indeed dastardly, to consider a marriage without having the means to keep a wife.

Mr. Sowerby, in spite of his disappointed hopes, proved reasonable too.

" Make good, Trewithen," he said. " You pretend to love my daughter ; if you do, prove worthy of your love. Come to me at the end of two years with proof that you have got the right stuff in you and I will not turn a deaf ear. But I am a plain practical man, and whatever I propose doing for Ursula myself I will never consent for her to marry a useless, penniless parasite."

This not only wounded Gwithian's pride but put him on his mettle.

" I accept your conditions, Mr. Sowerby," he said, " and I will abide by them."

As it happened fortune seemed to be in his favour. A com-

pany had been formed which had large mining interests in South Africa, and Gwithian obtained an appointment under it. Ursula, carried away by her fervour for her lover and by the pictures of the future which he painted for her, promised to wait for him not only two years, but twenty if necessary, and Gwithian, his heart beating high with hope and with a determination not only to make good, but to make a position of which Mr. Sowerby would be proud, went away with a heart full of hope.

I will not attempt to describe his doings in the Dark Continent. Enough to say that, buoyed up by his love for Ursula and by the hopes he cherished, he threw his whole heart into his work.

Possessing, as he did, more than an average amount of brains, added to a love for his work, he devoted his every energy to the task before him. For a time nothing but disappointment met him, and it seemed to him as though, not only would the company lose the money they had ventured, but all his own plans would come to nothing.

He wrote to Ursula despondingly, and told her that as the venture held out no promise he would release her from their engagement. She, on the other hand, refused to accept this. She wrote confessing undying affection and told him that whether he succeeded or whether he failed she should love him, and him only, and would wait until the end of her life for him.

Then came a change in his fortunes. In a district which other mining experts had examined and reported to be worthless, he found what he believed to be a rich tin lode. Of the anxious days which followed I need not tell, neither will I try to describe the difficulties he had with the company to which he belonged. More than once black ruin stared him in the face, everything appeared against him. The climate was unhealthy, suitable labour was almost impossible to find, uncertainty was in the air. Still, upheld by Ursula's love and his desire to prove himself worthy of her, he braved everything.

And he had his reward. When the company refused to advance another penny, and decided to withdraw altogether, he ventured not only all his little savings, but the small patrimony he had inherited from his mother. He also entered into partnership with a man who had a little capital, and who, having faith in Gwithian's judgment, was willing to join him. As a result, at the end of two years he found himself possessor of a fortune far beyond his dreams. He thereupon wrote to Ursula, and while not revealing the full extent of his good fortune, told her that he was now in a position to marry, and was coming home

as soon as he had arranged his affairs in order to claim the happiness he had so long struggled for. During the last few months Ursula's letters had been infrequent; but this did not trouble him. He was far away from the great highways of life and many had missed him. Besides, he was confident of her faithfulness to him, and when at length he embarked for England it was with a heart full of high hopes for the future, and the certainty of more than a glad welcome from the girl for whom he had risked everything.

On the arrival of his ship at Southampton he had sent a telegram to his fiancée, telling her the time his train would be due at Waterloo Station. On his arrival, however, no one was there to give him a welcome. Why, he couldn't tell, but it seemed to him as though his heart had been touched by an icy hand. He tried to dispel the dread which possessed him, but he was unable to do so. He told himself that a thousand things might have prevented her coming, that she might have been away from home when the telegram arrived, that she had some engagement which she could not forgo, that she was perhaps ill and unable to come; but none of them comforted him.

Having made arrangements for his luggage, he got into a taxi and drove to Mr. Sowerby's house. He found the place in darkness. A sombre-looking servant answered his ring.

"Is Mr. Sowerby at home?"

"No, sir," the man, who evidently recognized him, said. "Mr. and Mrs. Sowerby are gone into the country for a few days."

"Is Miss Sowerby at home?"

The man smiled significantly.

"There is no Miss Sowerby," he replied.

"No Miss Sowerby!" repeated Gwithian. "I don't understand."

"Miss Sowerby, or the young lady who was Miss Sowerby, was married three days ago in St. George's Church, Hanover Square, to the Right Honourable George Cracknell, M.P.," replied the man pompously.

"Married!" repeated Gwithian.

"Yes, sir," replied the man. "A full report of the wedding was given in Toosday's *Morning Post*. Good evening, sir."

Gwithian was bewildered, stunned. This, then, was the end of all he had hoped for, struggled for; this was the result of a woman's promises.

For a minute he stood on the doorstep, unable to comprehend; the thing was too grotesque, too unbelievable. The

dearest hopes he had ever cherished were shattered in a moment. Like a man in a dream he went back to the taxi which had been waiting in the street.

"Where to, sir?" asked the driver.

"Where? I don't know—anywhere."

"Very good, sir, but anywhere's nowhere. I suppose you don't want me to drive around the streets of London all night?"

"Drive to—drive to—Berner's Hotel," he managed to say at length.

"That bloke's 'ad one in the eye," reflected the driver as he started the car; "he looks like a sort of prodigal son who 'as come 'ome but 'asn't found the fatted calf killed for 'im."

Gwithian Trewithen was able to secure a room at Berner's Hotel, and after a bath and some dinner was able to collect his thoughts. He was alone in London. As far as he knew he had not a single friend there. It was possible, probable, that he might find acquaintances if he took the trouble to discover them; but he knew of none. On going to South Africa he had resigned the two clubs of which he had been a member and so had no right of entry to them. What should he do with himself?

The thought of going to any place of amusement was repugnant to him; he was too heartsore for that. Besides, he felt far from well. Not only had the news of Ursula's unfaithfulness knocked all the heart out of him, but he felt sure that an attack of malarial fever was coming on him. More than once during his stay in South Africa had he been laid low by the fever common to the district, and he knew by his throbbing temples and the cold shivers which passed down his back that this old enemy was haunting him. He did not think he was going to be very ill, but he felt lonely, depressed; sick in body as well as in heart.

"And I never had a doubt of her," he reflected. "I never dreamt that she would play me false."

With a kind of morbid desire for self-torture he rang for a waiter and asked him to get him the previous Tuesday's *Morning Post*, and, on its being brought, he examined its columns. Yes, there it was under the list of Society Weddings. The notice contained the usual details.

"Ursula, only daughter of Mr. Michael Sowerby, married to the Right Honourable George Cracknell." The names of the wedding guests were given, the presents and the ladies' dresses described. Good lord! What a mockery!

He threw the paper down with an exclamation of impatience. What had life to offer him? For more than two years he had

struggled and fought to prove himself worthy of this girl, while she, regardless of her promises, had listened to the pleadings of another man. Carried away by the glamour of the position which he offered her, she had, without a word to him, married this favourite of society.

What should he do? Where should he go? He took up the paper again and began to read its general contents, but it had no interest for him. He cared nothing for political squabbles, or industrial troubles; he was sick and tired of the whole turmoil of life.

He was about to throw down the paper a second time when the lines with which this narrative commenced met his eye.

TO BE LET OR SOLD

"Unique old-fashioned cottage, furnished or unfurnished."

Of course it had no interest for him, but he read the description. "Truro." That of course was the capital of Cornwall.

Why it was he did not know, but acting upon impulse he went to the writing table and wrote the following letter:

"Dear Sirs,—
Please send me particulars of the enclosed."

Then, tearing out the advertisement, he wrapped it in his letter and addressed it to the house agents.

He went to bed feeling very weary. He wished he could fall asleep and never wake again. What had life to offer him? After more than two years of hardship and struggle against almost impossible odds he had come home to find—this. He recalled Byron's lines about a woman's promises being written on sand. He had been a fool to expect any other. All women were the same; selfish, cruel, fickle, worthless. Every woman would sell herself to the highest bidder, no matter who the bidder might be.

He scarcely slept that night. His head ached and throbbed, his blood ran like liquid fire through his veins. More than once he was on the point of sending for a doctor; but why should he? Dying was an unpleasant business, but at least it was the end of everything.

The next day he did not leave the hotel. Although much better he hadn't sufficient energy to move from the room. The following day, however, the fever left him, and although weak and languid he found his way into Oxford Circus. Oh how he hated London! how he loathed this incessant roar and rush of life! What a home-coming! He called to mind his

hopes and dreams while on his homeward journey, and then remembered what the servant had told him when he had called at Mr. Sowerby's house.

Presently he reached the Marble Arch and, going into the Park, went to a chair and sat down. Heavens, he could not bear it. London was a great maelstrom; it was bewildering, it was maddening. It was the place of buried hopes, of unfulfilled longings. Even there in the Park, in the full glory of its summer splendour, it was only a mockery. He would get away; —but where? His father and mother were dead; he was an only child, and he had no interest in any relations he had ever had. Besides, no one wanted him.

"Surely that can't be Mr. Gwithian?"

The voice seemed familiar; it recalled pleasant days, happy memories. Turning, he saw a middle-aged man, a most respectable-looking man who might have been an Archbishop out of uniform, or an old-fashioned lawyer on holiday. He was clean-shaven except for little tufts of whiskers just below his ears. He was attired in black, his linen was immaculate, his boots shone brightly.

"Surely that isn't Cradock?"

"Then it *is* Mr. Gwithian! Well, sir, I *am* pleased. Who would have thought that I should have met you like this?"

"Then you are Cradock?"

"Yes, sir, of course I am, and delighted to see you."

"And you are living in London?"

"Well, sir, in a way I am not living anywhere."

"Yes, I remember now; you got married after my father died. Where is your wife?"

"She's dead, Mr. Gwithian; dead, I am thankful to say."

"When did she die?"

"Last week, Mr. Gwithian."

"Then you must be lonely."

"Lonely? Well, sir, in a way that's true; but if you understand me, sir, it's a very pleasant loneliness; it's a great relief, sir. But if you don't mind I would rather say no more about it."

"It's five years since my father died; what have you been doing since then?"

"Doing, sir? Yes, I must tell you. Four times I got a place as butler, with my wife as cook, but they couldn't stand her, sir—they couldn't stand her. Then, I got a place by myself and provided lodgings for her; but she haunted me, sir, she haunted me. Then, thank God, she took ill and died. I am

out of a place now, sir. You know me and you know my ways; do you among your friends know a place likely to suit me?"

Gwithian shook his head.

"I was with your father nearly twenty years, as you know, and if—if—I wouldn't ask high wages, sir, and it would sort of link me up with the past."

Gwithian saw what was in Cradock's mind, but he shook his head. What need had he for a man-servant? Then the memory of the advertisement he had seen in the *Morning Post* on the night of his return flashed into his mind. "Ideal for those desiring rural peaceful country. Two miles from sea and post office."

"Cradock," he exclaimed suddenly after a long silence.

"Yes, sir?"

"I am staying at Berner's Hotel."

"I know the place well, sir. A good house."

"Call and see me to-morrow afternoon at three o'clock."

"Yes, sir; I shall be delighted, sir."

Cradock looked at the young man's face as if expecting to hear him say more, but noting his look, went away without another word. Cradock instinctively felt that this was not the time for further speech.

Gwithian felt better for this chance meeting with his father's old servant. It had been like meeting an old friend to meet with Cradock. After all, there was someone in the world who cared for him. He almost looked forward to the next day when he would have a further chat with this old-time servant.

The following morning the waiter laid a package before him at the breakfast table.

"I think this is for you, sir," he said. "It came by the last post last night."

"Who can be writing me?" thought Gwithian. "No one knows I am here."

Then, on looking at the back of the package, he saw the words "Polkinhorne and Linkinhorne, House Agents, Truro, Cornwall." He remembered then that he had written asking for particulars of the cottage which had been advertised.

"DEAR SIR" (he read),—

"Herewith find enclosed particulars of Cromlech Cottage, Pendragon, Cornwall, as requested, which we trust you will find of interest. We would point out that the present owner and late occupier of Cromlech Cottage spent a considerable sum

of money in restoring and modernizing this unique house. It is of a great age and was at one time the residence of the then Earl of Pendragon, whose name is known to all lovers of Cornish history. We also enclose a photograph of the house for your inspection. We regret that as more than a year has passed since the late occupant left it, the gardens, which are of much natural beauty, have been neglected, and thus present an unfortunate appearance. We mention this to avoid misunderstanding. Hoping to hear from you.

"We are,

"Yours faithfully,

"POLKINHORNE & LINKINHORNE."

"There is something behind this," thought Gwithian. "Why should those fellows go to the trouble to explain to me that the garden has been neglected? More than that, why has it stood empty for more than a year?"

He unfolded the package which had been sent and read the description which had been printed. Certainly, whoever had written the stuff was either a first-rate liar or the cottage was especially attractive.

"Granite walls, two foot six thick," he read. "Old-fashioned carved porch, deep window seats, huge oak beams. Dash it all, it sounds quite romantic."

Then he noticed a large envelope which he imagined contained further particulars, but on opening it found a photograph.

When he looked at the photograph he was almost fascinated. Yes, the agents were right; it was a unique, old-time cottage. A place evidently of great age, granite-built, low-roofed, restful. He seemed to breathe the air of the country as he looked. He thought of the phrase, "Far from the madding crowd," and pictured green meadows, rippling brooks, and quaint old-fashioned gardens.

Well, why not? He was tired of the world, disappointed with the whole scheme of existence—and he must live somewhere.

Hardly realizing what he was doing, he turned to the writing desk and wrote a further letter asking certain questions.

When, later in the day, Cradock appeared, he was evidently interested.

"Cradock," he asked, "have you got a place yet?"

"No, Mr. Gwithian, I have been hoping——" Then he became silent.

"Hoping what?" asked Gwithian.

"Excuse me, Mr. Gwithian," and Cradock looked at the young man intently; "but you don't look well. Your skin is a bad colour and I think you want someone to look after you."

"And you want to be that someone, eh?"

"If you would only let me, Mr. Gwithian, I'd like it better than anything else in the world."

"Would you live in the country, Cradock—Cornwall, for example?"

"Cornwall, sir? Why, I was born there! I would give my eyes to go there with you, sir."

"You wouldn't mind a lonely place, two miles from everywhere?"

"Lonely place? Two miles from everywhere. It would be heaven, sir. If you knew my wife! Well, I needn't say any more."

A week later Gwithian had taken the cottage with an option to purchase should he feel disposed to do so. The answers which Polkinhorne & Linkinhorne had sent in response to his letter were so satisfactory that he no longer hesitated. Besides, the thought of going to his native county, even although he had never lived there except for the two years he had been studying mining engineering at the School of Mines, seemed like some healing balm.

"Cradock," he said to the old servant who was visiting him at the time the agent's last letter arrived, "I will give you three days to go and get that house into a habitable condition." And he passed him the photograph as he spoke.

"It's a lovely little place, sir," remarked Cradock after he had examined the photograph, "but three days is a short time to furnish it and make it ready for you. Still, it shall be done."

"It is furnished," replied Gwithian. "All you have to do is to clean it, air it and make it fit for human habitation. You can get a man to work in the garden, and some woman to scrub out the rooms."

"I will hire a man with pleasure, sir, but I'd rather not have anything to do with women, if you don't mind. Women is the devil, sir."

"I have no doubt you are right; but I imagine it will be difficult to get a man in the parish of Pendragon who will do the household work. The agents refer me to an old woman who will be willing——"

"If she is *old*, sir—that is, over sixty—I don't mind; but if she is a marriageable woman——"

"I give you a free hand," laughed Gwithian; "only get the place ready. I am writing by this post to tell the agents that I am taking the house. Can you leave to-morrow morning?"

"I'd like to leave *to-night*, sir, if you don't mind. I could easily pack up and get to Paddington in time for the night express; then I shall have a longer time. Besides, my wife was buried at Kensal Green only a week or so ago and I want to get away, sir. I feel as though that woman is haunting me here in London."

Gwithian laughed again; it was evident that his new venture was already doing him good.

"Then you will stay here until I am ready for you, sir? Shall I send a wire when things are shipshape, or will you——"

"You will leave to-night, as you say," interrupted Gwithian. "To-morrow I am going to buy a motor-car and I shall drive down. I shall take three days on the journey and thus get to you somewhere about Friday afternoon."

"Make it Saturday, sir. Friday is an unlucky day and we mustn't spoil this new venture by going against Providence. Besides, it will give me a little longer to put everything straight. To-day is Monday, and if I get there by to-morrow morning—that will be Tuesday—I will have the place as clean as a new pin by Saturday. But don't come on Friday, sir, please don't; it would bring bad luck."

The next day Gwithian went to New Bond Street, where he visited several motor-car agents. For some time he could not decide as to the particular car he wanted, but at length he found one which exactly accorded with his desire.

"I will take it," he said. "I will write you a cheque now, and you must deliver it at Berner's Hotel at nine o'clock to-morrow morning."

The next day he was on the road. Before eleven o'clock he had left Barnes behind and before midday he was nearing Salisbury Plain. The car ran with marvellous sweetness. Everything about it was perfect. Its gear change was noiseless, it held the road to perfection, it accelerated like magic. Had he wished, he could have done fifty miles an hour easily, but he seldom went more than half that speed. For one thing he knew it would be bad for the car to put on speed before it had done a few hundred miles, and for another he wanted to take it easily. A feeling of restfulness was coming over him. The thought of being away from the roar of London was healing to his soul. The knowledge that Ursula Sowerby was the wife of another man was ceasing to hurt him.

When he reached Exeter, where he had decided to spend the night, he was scarcely tired at all. But he was becoming excited. The thought that the next day he would be in Cornwall caused a strange feeling at heart. Why this should be he did not know; but it was so. The picture of the cottage constantly haunted him. He felt as though he were on the brink of a great discovery; that experiences such as he had never known before were going to be his. That was perhaps why he left Exeter early on the Thursday morning. He had decided to remain a good part of the day in Exeter examining the Cathedral and roaming among its streets; but he had a feverish desire to get on, and by half-past eight he was on the road again. From Exeter he had a choice of three routes. One was through Okehampton, Launceston, and over the Bodmin Moors. The next was across Dartmoor, and through Tavistock and Callington. The third was through Plymouth, Liskeard and down the famous Bodmin valley. He chose the last, and no sooner had he crossed the Ferry from Plymouth to Torpoint than his excitement became almost feverish. He scarcely noticed the loveliness of the country as he passed through wooded dells and climbed steep hills; he was eager to get to the end of his journey; eager to enter the little cottage which somehow had become a part of his life.

"It's the Cornish air," he reflected; "it is that wonderful something in the atmosphere which is affecting me."

Arriving at Truro, he called at the offices of the house agents, who kept him a considerable time. They insisted on taking him to the Red Lion Hotel for lunch, after which they transacted the necessary business in relation to his tenancy.

"You mustn't be disturbed at any stories you may hear in Pendragon," Mr. Polkinhorne said to him at parting.

"Stories?" repeated Gwithian. "What stories?"

"Oh, there are always stories about such an old house as that, and country people are full of gossip. You see, although it is only a cottage, it is historic, and being built hundreds and hundreds of years ago, all sorts of superstitions have gathered around it."

"What kind of superstitions?"

"Oh, the usual ones, but nothing that need disturb a sane man. I congratulate you on securing such a delightful place; I am sure you will learn to love it."

It was late in the afternoon when he left the house agents' offices, and the shadows of evening were beginning to fall when the old grey tower of Pendragon Church disclosed itself to him.

"I expect the house will be far from ready," he reflected as

he drew near the village, "and poor old Cradock will be in all sorts of a stew when he sees me. But I don't care; I am going to sleep there to-night."

He loved Pendragon when he saw it; it was all that a country village should be—clean, quiet, restful. The cottages were built higgledy-piggledy without any plan or order, but everything was as it should be. The houses were granite-built, slate-roofed; everything was right. The old square tower with its four ornamented pinnacles, and the quiet church which nestled beneath it, appealed to him strongly.

"Can you tell me the way to Cromlech Cottage?" he asked of an old woman who had brought her pitchers to the village pump.

"Cromlech Cottage?" the old woman repeated, looking at him curiously. "You'd'main——?" She checked herself and was silent for a second. "You caan't miss it. You do taake that lane there on the right; go down 'bout 'aaf a mile and pass the Pendragon 'All Lodge gates on the left. Then you do bear to the right till you cross a stream o' water, and then it's right afore 'ee."

He thanked the old dame, pressed the accelerator and the car swept down the lane.

On each side of him were leafy woods. No sound was to be heard save the chirping of the birds. He passed the gates which were evidently the entrance to a great house, and then he came to the stream which the old woman had mentioned. Near the stream stood a great rock more than twenty feet high; then having crossed it he saw on the slope of the hill the house which he had come so far to find. The sun was now setting, and a strange quietness rested on everything.

Almost instinctively he stopped the car and sat looking at the old grey stone, lichen-covered building. Was it fear that entered his heart, or was it simply the excitement caused by what the house agent had told him?

"I won't bother about the car now," he reflected. "I must get in at once; I am longing to see it."

CHAPTER II

CROMLECH COTTAGE

GWITHIAN saw at a glance that whatever might be the present condition of the cottage a great deal of attention had been paid to it in the past. At the front a low stone wall had been built which looked as old as the house itself. There

was also an iron gate which opened on to a stone-paved pathway which led up to the front door. The house stood perhaps twenty feet back from the wall. Rose trees had been trained along the cottage front and partly hid the granite of which it was built. For that matter, it was more than a cottage ; and at first glance looked almost like a small manor-house. But it had the cottage feeling. Windows, doors, chimneys, and the general structure of the place would allow it to be designated by no other term. Just a gentleman's cottage ; modest in proportions, yet possessing that air of restfulness which delighted Gwithian's heart. Much as he wanted to go inside he could not help standing on the flagged pathway and gazing around him. In the near distance, and almost hidden by trees, were three other little dwellings—labourers' cottages. But they did not offend in any way ; they too possessed the spirit of restfulness which pervaded the countryside. Cromlech Cottage stood on the side of the hill, at the bottom of which ran the little stream we have mentioned, and whose murmur could be heard plainly from where he stood.

"How quiet, how blessedly quiet it is!" he said to himself. "'Two miles from the nearest post office ; '—that will be in Pendragon Churchtown. The sea must be in another direction."

Listening again he was sure he heard the swish of waves as they rolled on a rock-bound coast. Yes, it was quiet ; but it was terribly lonely. Not a living creature could he see, neither man nor beast was in sight.

Away in the direction from which he had come he saw an expanse of woods, while from between the trees he caught a glimpse of a large house ; it looked like a mansion.

"That will be Pendragon Hall," he reflected. "I wonder who lives there."

In the direction opposite to that of the Hall, a high hill rose, rock-covered, grim, almost forbidding. On its summit huge stones rose, stones which looked as though they had been placed there by human hands.

"That'll be The Cromlech after which the cottage is called," he reflected. "I expect there are legends about those old stones. Probably some of the old Cornish kings were buried under them."

Again he examined the exterior of the house. Yes, Polkinhorne and Linkinhorne were right. Evidently a considerable sum of money had been spent in restoration. The place had doubtless fallen into decay, but money had been lavished freely to restore it to its original condition. And the money had been spent

wisely. Great taste had been displayed, and much thought and care had been taken. The front door, which was new, might have been old, so carefully had the designer been to make it accord with the building ; while on every side all signs of newness had been avoided.

He almost wished that there were more evidences of modernity ; he might have been living two hundred years before.

Sounds within the cottage awoke him to the realization of why he was there ; doubtless Cradock would be hard at work preparing the place for his coming.

He opened the door and entered. Evening had now fallen, but the light was sufficient for him to see the outlines of the room in which he found himself. This was doubtless the large sitting-room referred to in the advertisement.

As rooms in larger houses go it was, of course, small ; but it looked spacious nevertheless. Perhaps it was sixteen feet square, and it was furnished not only with taste but with comfort. He saw two large leather-covered arm-chairs. An old-fashioned refectory table stood by one of the walls. Another table of carved oak was in the middle of the room. A thickly piled carpet lay on the floor. The fireplace might not have been altered since the day it was built. It was an open chimney, granite-paved, while two heavy granite posts supported a granite slab which formed the mantelpiece. A heavy dog grate, which might have been manufactured by an artist, had been placed upon the hearth, while the fire-irons accorded with the grate.

"Evidently Gabriel Chirgwin meant to make himself comfortable here," thought Gwithian. "I wonder why, after spending so much money, he left it ? Polkinhorne suggested that he was eccentric and a hermit ; but hermits' cells were different from these. Now I come to think of it, he was mighty reticent about Gabriel Chirgwin. The whole place smacks of mystery."

Again sounds from a room which evidently stood near by reached him ; he made his way towards them and saw Cradock hard at work polishing a cooking range which had become rusty. Cradock started as he entered and gazed at him almost fearfully. No sooner did he recognize him, however, than a look of gladness came into his eyes.

"It's Mr. Gwithian ! " he gasped. "Thank God you have come, sir ! "

"Yes," replied Gwithian, "I am afraid I got here before you were expecting me, and I am jolly hungry too. Have you anything to eat ? "

"Yes, sir, I have, sir. Of course, if I'd known you were coming I'd have managed differently, but—but never mind. Thank God you've come!"

"I started fairly early yesterday morning," explained Gwithian. "I meant to have loitered on the journey, but when I once got on the way I felt I must get here at once."

"Thank God you did, sir."

"Why, has anything happened to you? You are all right, aren't you?"

"Oh yes, sir. I am all right."

"And nothing has happened to you?"

"No, sir—not in a way. It doesn't matter now you have come. I sent a young fellow with a horse and cart to the nearest town, who brought a lot of eatables, so I am well prepared. I will get everything ready at once."

"And I will put away the car meanwhile. I haven't seen the garage yet, though."

"It's at the back of the house, sir. I fancy it was an old barn at one time, but the late owner put a new roof to it, and I think there's quite room for a car. If you like I will come and show you."

"Don't trouble," laughed Gwithian. "Get on with preparing something to eat. I shall have no difficulty in finding the way."

The sight of Cradock's face, and the sound of his voice, had robbed him of the eerie feeling which possessed him a few minutes before.

He quickly found the garage, and, having put away his car, looked around him. Yes, there was quite a commodious yard with some outhouses for which he could see no use, but which he would discover the next day. One thing struck him forcibly. Gabriel Chirgwin must have been a well-to-do man. He had simply lavished money on the place. Everything was done as if with the intent of making the property a permanent resting-place. The garage, for example, had been fitted up regardless of expense. It had evidently been a tumble-down building, and he had had it restored by the best material and the best workmanship.

Gwithian walked around the garden which lay at the back of the cottage. Evidently Cradock had secured a gardener, for, although much of it was weed-covered, a corner of the enclosure had been newly dug, and endeavours were being made to restore it to something like order.

He went back to the house again and was shown by Cradock

into a small apartment which was furnished as a dining-room. Here again were evidences not only of taste, but of wealth. Every chair, indeed every article of furniture, might have been made by an artist; to say the least of it, it was a wonderful cottage.

"Can you manage with this, sir?" asked Cradock, and he nodded to some cold viands he had placed on the table.

"If it is as good as it looks it is a repast fit for a king," laughed Gwithian. "How far are we from the nearest town?"

"Seven miles, sir. When I found out what it was like I felt we had better be prepared, so I wrote a rather extensive order. Is there anything more I can get you, sir?"

"No, but don't go away; I want to talk with you. You must have worked very hard, Cradock, since you came."

"Yes, sir, I have; but the place wasn't as bad as I expected to find it."

"No?"

"That old woman you told me about, Susan Jory, had come over every now and again, and opened the windows, and lit fires. All the same I can't understand, sir."

"Can't understand what?"

"Well, sir, think for yourself, sir. The furniture in this house must have cost hundreds of pounds, while hundreds more must have been spent on the building itself. Everything is in perfect order, too; and yet the gentleman who spent all this money on it stayed here—how long do you think?—Only a week, sir!"

"Only a week!"

"That's what I am told, sir. After fitting it up suitable for any gentleman in the land, sir, he stays just one week."

"Polkinhorne did not tell me that," reflected Gwithian.

"That old woman Susan Jory has told me curious things."

"What things?"

"Well, sir, as far as I could discover from that old woman's disconnected story, this old place, Cromlech Cottage, had been uninhabited for years. It is said that at one time a very great gentleman lived here—the Earl of Pendragon—and then, when he died, it became a sort of nunnery. Several women who wished to live a religious life came here and stayed by themselves. Well, sir, I don't know much about it; but it appears that they died one by one. When the last gave up the ghost, the place became deserted. The garden was allowed to run wild, roofs were allowed to let in water, and the timbers to rot. That went on for years. The few meadows around the house were used by an old farmer who

lives about a half a mile away, but the house itself fell into decay. People wouldn't go near it, sir; they said it was haunted."

"But the house, the fields, must have belonged to somebody. Who owned it?"

"It belonged to the owner of Pendragon Hall, sir."

"What, that big house among the trees?"

"That's right, sir. Well, it seems that Mr. Chirgwin went to the Pendragon steward and offered to buy it. What he gave for it I don't know. Anyhow, the bargain was made and he started to renovate it."

"But stop a moment, who was, or is, this Mr. Chirgwin?"

"Nobody knows, sir, at least as far as I can tell. Anyhow, he got workmen from a distance to come here and they made it as you see it. Of course, there were all sorts of stories about him, but no one knew anything for certain. I am told that the furniture was sent from London, but of that I am not sure. Anyhow, he didn't stay long, sir, only one week, Susan Jory assured me, and then he went away and has never been seen since. He just put the place in the agent's hands and told him to do his best with it. But it must be haunted, sir."

"Why should it be?"

"I suppose several people have come to look over it, sir; perhaps they have examined it out of curiosity; anyhow, when they heard the stories they refused to take it. That's why you have got it so cheap, sir; but I doubt if you will stay here."

"Come now, you haven't told me all. What's in your mind?"

"I am not a superstitious man, sir; I never was a superstitious man, and I thought nothing of sleeping here alone. I left London last Monday night as I said, sir, and when I got to the station on Tuesday morning I hired a conveyance and came here. I got the key from Susan Jory and I started to work at once. I worked till nearly midnight. When night came I aired some bedclothes and went to my little room."

"Well, did anything happen?"

Cradock was silent a few seconds. "Well, sir—*happen*, sir? I can't exactly put it into words."

"That's nonsense. If something happened you can tell me what it was."

"Well, sir, it's this way. It didn't seem to me that I had been asleep long before I heard noises."

"Rats, I suppose. We must get rid of those."

"Can rats move furniture, sir? Can rats move a refectory table from one side of a room to another, sir?"

"They must be pretty stout rats if they did," laughed Gwithian. "But you were dreaming, Cradock."

"Dreaming, sir! Do you think I didn't think of that? Have you finished your meal, sir? Can I get anything more for you?"

"No."

"Then come with me, sir," and Cradock led the way into the larger sitting-room.

"Before I went to bed on Tuesday night, sir, I naturally took a careful look round me. I went into every room and saw that the windows were closed. I took special notice of that old refectory table, sir. I said to myself, 'It's a genuine antique, and must be worth a lot of money.' It's heavy, too, sir, and it was placed just here, just as it is now, sir. Well, as I told you, I thought I heard noises through the night, rumbling noises. I can't deny it, sir, I was a little bit frightened; perhaps you can understand. This is an old place and it's very lonely. I shouted, 'Who's there?' and then I got up and lit the candle. When I came down here I found that that table had been moved out here, sir," and he indicated the spot. "Can rats do that, sir?"

"They must be a mighty fine breed of rats if they could," Gwithian laughed; "but don't lose your head, Cradock; we shall find an explanation presently. Come to that, a ghost adds new interest to the house."

"They drove away Mr. Chirgwin, sir. He couldn't stand it any more than you will be able to stand it."

"I have an idea that I shall. I see that you have a fire laid in the grate; put a match to it, will you? It's July, but it's a little chilly. After I have seen the bedrooms I shall have a read before going to bed. By the way, did a parcel of books come from London?"

"Yes, sir, it came yesterday."

Gwithian went upstairs and examined the bedrooms. The two principal ones stood over the two sitting-rooms.

That over the larger sitting-room was quite a handsome apartment, and, like the rest of the rooms, well furnished. Gwithian, candle in hand, examined them closely. He opened cupboard doors and peered into every nook and corner.

"It all seems straightforward," he reflected. "There are no suggestions of anything mysterious. I expect Cradock must have been walking in his sleep."

He found his way into the larger sitting-room again. By this time the fire was burning brightly, and Cradock having put the lamp on the table, the place was quite cosy. Having un-

fastened the parcel of books, he threw himself into one of the arm-chairs and prepared to read. Not a single word registered itself upon his mind, however.

He found himself thinking of the last two years. They had been two crucial years as far as he was concerned.

"By Jove, I had a time of it!" he said to himself; "it seemed sometimes as though the very genius of failure dogged me. My health was shattered, my money was gone, the company had chucked the whole business, and left me there alone. However——"

A knock came to the door.

"Anything more you require, sir?"

"No, thank you, Cradock. By the way, if you hear or see anything to-night, you need not be afraid to wake me."

"Thank you, sir."

He heard the man go upstairs and close his bedroom door behind him. A few minutes later all became silent. Yes, and it *was* silent, too! The silence of the heart of the country. He did not feel at all sleepy, and the thought of going to bed was repugnant to him. After his first day's motoring he had dropped asleep as soon as his head lay on the pillow, but now he was strangely awake. Of course, it was the strange experiences of coming into this so-called haunted house. Not that he believed in it. He did not give the slightest credence to Cradock's story; the whole thing was chimerical, absurd. Haunted house indeed! But there must be some basis of truth for all the stories one heard.

He turned to the parcel of books which lay on the table by his side and began to examine them. The librarian had been very catholic in his choice. Four novels, a book of travel, a volume of Poems, a Treatise on Finance, and one or two others which could not be classified. Gwithian laughed as he examined them He picked up one of the novels by a writer of detective fiction—*Murder Will Out*, he read. Almost carelessly he examined the first page; it was headed by some lines from an old Greek writer.

"Now, this I say," he read. "In spite of all that may appear to the contrary, no deed ever dies, and the gods have a way of bringing evil deeds to light. Unknown to the world, forces go on working, ever revealing forgotten truths. Let no man think that because an evil deed is done in secret it will not be known; it will be known. Suns may rise and suns may set, kingdoms may rise and kingdoms may fall; centuries may pass, but the doer of the evil deed will be punished, and the perpetrator of the evil thing will become known. This is the will of the gods."

"I will go to bed," said Gwithian, throwing the book aside.

Half an hour later he was about to blow out the candle preparatory to getting between the sheets. Before doing so, however, he pulled aside the little curtain from the window and looked out. It was a windless night and it was almost as bright as day. A nearly full moon sailed in the cloudless Heaven. Not a star appeared. Hill and vale, craggy peak and leafy woods spread themselves out before him in a vast panorama. The spirit of night brooded over everything. He stood looking for some minutes, then he gave a deep sigh. The scene beggared words, beggared even thought. A minute later he was in bed.

He had not felt at all sleepy, yet no sooner had he laid his head upon the pillow than he became unconscious to the world. Great mother nature had taken him in her kindly arms and held him fast. How long he slept he did not know. It might have been hours, it might only have been minutes; but he woke suddenly, and he felt his blood grow cold in his veins.

It was a ghastly cry he heard, yet scarcely a cry. A moan, a beseeching appeal, an expression of agony. It did not seem like a human voice at all. It seemed as though some being from another world uttered unhuman wailings.

He crept out of bed and looked out of the window.

There, just before the gate, he saw what looked like a human form standing out plainly against the sky. For nearly a minute it stood motionless with its head bent towards the ground. Then suddenly it raised not only its hands but its face, a face which Gwithian saw plainly. The moonlight shone upon it and revealed every feature. It was a hideous face; a face contorted not only by physical pain but by mad passions. It was the face of a man. Fascinated, Gwithian looked unable to speak, and as he looked the thing, whatever it was, faded out of his sight.

"I am dreaming," he reflected. "My brain has been unhinged by Cradock's story, and this is the result of it. But I will go down and see; I will make sure."

Before he had made a movement, however, his attention was again arrested. The sound of distant footsteps reached him; light, quick footsteps. They seemed to come from the brook which rippled in the valley near by. They became plain and still more plain. Pat, pat, pat, pat. Then they suddenly stopped.

Standing at the open gateway, and looking at the window from which he gazed, was the form of a woman, a young woman. This time it was not a hideous face that he saw, but something essentially beautiful. It made him think, not of hell, but of some-

thing entirely different. It was clearly outlined in the light of the moon, so plainly that he could see every feature. The perfect oval of the face, the delicate contour of the chin and nose, the roundness of the cheeks, the flash of the wide-open eyes. And yet it did not seem a creature of flesh and blood at all. It was too ethereal, too unreal.

For a minute the apparition stood as if looking, watching, listening—especially listening.

Beautiful,—yes, it was beautiful ; but terribly sad. It seemed the incarnation of hopelessness, of despair. And yet he was not sure. There was something else that came to him, not so much as a distinct thought, but as an impression.

He heard a sound. It might have been a sob, or it might only have been a questioning cry. Then, the vision—whatever it was—passed out of his sight, passed, too, out of his hearing, for no other sound reached him.

Why it was he did not know, but it seemed to him that this vision of the night would have a great meaning in his life ; that his future would be interwoven with that of the woman he had seen.

CHAPTER III

GOSSIP

GWITHIAN TREWITHEN stood for nearly a minute like one paralysed. He was unable to speak or move. He felt the cold perspiration gather upon his forehead, felt cold shivers going down his back. Then, slowly, he became his normal self again. His innate strength asserted itself, his brain began to work quickly. Lighting a candle, he found his way to the door of Cradock's room. Listening, he heard the sound of deep stertorous breathing. Cradock was evidently asleep and had heard nothing.

Going back to his room, he went to bed again and slept soundly until the morning.

When he woke the sun was shining brightly ; he had been asleep nearly seven hours. It was just nine.

" Your bath is ready, sir ; there is hot water if you would like to have it."

" I did not know there was a bathroom," he laughed. " Where is it ? "

" Didn't I show it you, sir ? It's along the little passage outside your bedroom door."

A minute later he felt the sting of cold water on his skin.

Yes, Gabriel Chirgwin had evidently restored the house to some purpose. He did not expect this luxury.

"Sleep well last night, Cradock?"

"Splendid, sir."

"Hear anything?"

"No, sir, nothing. Have you slept well, sir?"

"More than seven hours," he replied. "As for the bath, it was delicious. By Jove, old Chirgwin was a peach. I wonder he didn't instal electric light when he was about it, though."

"He did, sir. The place is wired, and there is a little engine and battery close to the garage, but he left before it was completed."

"By Jove, is that so? Then we will complete it."

He felt strangely lighthearted. The experiences of a few hours before came to him now only as a dream. Everything that was sombre and forbidding had been driven away. The day was at the morn, the countryside was in the glory of its summer loveliness.

After breakfast he again explored his little domain; then he found his way to the cottages which lay in the valley.

"I was jist goin' up to the 'ouse, sir," an old dame whom he saw at one of the cottage doors informed him. "I be Mrs. Jory. You be the gentleman what's took the 'ouse, I spoase?"

"That is so. It was very good of you to help my man to clean the place."

"Do 'ee think you'll like Cromlech Cottage, sir?" asked the old dame, looking at him curiously.

"Why shouldn't I?"

Mrs. Jory was silent at this. She looked at him questioningly for some seconds as if wanting to speak, and yet not knowing whether it would be wise to do so.

"You looked after the place after Mr. Chirgwin left, didn't you?" continued Gwithian.

"'Es, sir. The gentleman from Trura axed me to do it. But I never went of a night-time, sir."

"Why not?"

Again the old dame hesitated. It was evident that she was eager to discuss matters with him, but something kept her silent.

"Come, tell me," persisted Gwithian. "From what I can gather from my man, you gave him some curious information."

"I've never seen nothin'," she burst forth. "'Ee's a liard ef 'ee told 'ee that; but the place 'ave got a bad name. I am sorry to say so, but it 'ave."

"In what way has it a bad name?"

"Why did Mr. Chirgwin leave it?" she asked. "'Ee must 'ave spent 'undreds and 'undreds of pounds there, and yet 'ee left it in a week. Poor gentleman, 'ee couldn' 'elp it. 'Ee brought two sarvents weth 'un, but they only stayed one night; and what could 'ee do there alone by 'isself?"

"Why did the servants leave him?"

"They never told me nothin', sir, but when dead people do traapse around a 'ouse of a night, what could they do?"

"Why should dead people trapse around the house, as you call it?"

"'Ow do I knaw? But this I *do* knaw, sir: things 'ave bin moved in that place without yuman 'ands touchin' them."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well, sir, I 'ave gone up there every Thursday for more'n a year, and when I 'ave left I 'ave left the place spick and span; but when I 'ave gone back again, things 'aven't been where I've left them."

By this time two other women had drawn near and were listening eagerly to the conversation. Gwithian's coming was evidently regarded as an event of great importance.

"Tell 'ee what," broke in one of the women, "ghosts may appear to common people, but they'll 'ave nothin' to do with nobody like this gentleman."

"Gentle or simple it's all the same with ghosts," retorted Susan Jory. "Mr. Chirgwin was a gentleman, and *'ee* couldn' live there. Of course, we don't want to frighten 'ee, sir; but we've purtly wondered 'bout 'ee. P'raps ef you was to get the Passon down, 'ee might lay the ghost."

"How is that done?" asked Gwithian.

"We don't knaw zackly, but old Granfer could tell 'ee."

"Who's Granfer?"

"Why, Granfer Crowle. 'Ee's more'n ninety an' 'ave lived 'ere all 'is life. I will ax'n to come out."

A minute later an old man appeared on the scene and Gwithian looked at him curiously. He was a little man, somewhat bent, but vigorous and active nevertheless.

"This is the gentleman who 'ave took Cromlech Cottage, Granfer." Mrs. Jory introduced him. "'Ee edn' afear'd of ghosts."

"Why should 'a be?" remarked the old man, touching his hat to Gwithian. "Ghosts do'ant 'urt nobody, and 'tes all a passel of nonsense talkin' 'bout 'em. I be ovver ninety, I be, and I was never 'urt by no ghost."

"Have you ever seen one?" asked Gwithian.

"Can't say as 'ow I 'ave," replied the old man. "I 'ave 'eerd strange noises up to your 'ouse; but what's noises? Noises do'ant 'urt."

"Do you know anything about Cromlech Cottage?" asked Gwithian.

"Knaw 'bout it? I 'ave knawed 'bout it all my life. Why, the old Earl of Pendragon lived there when I was a boy. Leastways, 'ee wasn't the Earl then; 'ee was only the younger brother. The Earl lived up at the big 'ouse. After the older brother died and 'ee got to be Earl 'ee left the cottage. 'Ee ought to 'ave been a monk."

"Who lives at Pendragon Hall now?" asked Gwithian.

"Mrs. Pendragon, to be sure."

"Then the Pendragon family still exists? I thought it had died out."

"There's a mystery 'bout that," replied Granfer. "The family died out, so to spaik, and in the end the 'state was sold. The man who bought it was called Pendragon. That was the late Mr. Pendragon's grandfather. Some do say that 'ee belonged to the old family, but we do'ant knaw nothin' 'bout that. The present Mrs. Pendragon is a second wife, so to spaik. The first Mrs. Pendragon was a lovely lady, she was; but she died 'ears and 'ears agone."

"But what is the mystery?" asked Gwithian.

"Well, sir, it's this way. The first Mrs. Pendragon, she died of child-birth. They'd only bin married a year when 'er two babbies were born. Twins they was, a boy and girl. You never saw a man so cut up as Mr. Pendragon was when his wife died; and when you come to think of it, 'twas terrble. 'Ere was 'ee left with two little cheldern, wethout a friend in the world, so to spaik,—that es ef rich people *can* be wethout friends. Then he went maazed."

"Maazed? Do you mean mad?"

"Tha's ev et. 'Ee went 'n' got married again."

"But surely that doesn't prove him mad?"

"Do'ant et?" asked Granfer significantly.

"I don't understand," said Gwithian. "Why should——"

"Who do understand?" broke in Granfer. "Of course 'ted'n for poor people like we to talk, but where be they dear cheldern now? Why, they must be a young man and woman by this time, and 'cordin' to the law of the land they should be owners ov everything. But where be 'em?"

Gwithian looked puzzled.

"Of course, we do'an' know nothin'," went on the old man. "But Maaster Pendragon fair worshipped they cheldern, and yet nobody a'ant 'eerd of 'em since 'ee died."

"Then Mr. Pendragon is dead?"

"Ded'n I tell 'ee? Of course 'ee es, an' that Trounce woman ev got everything, while they dear cheldern what Maaster Roger worshipped, be—— Do'ant I wish I knawed? I was gardener up to the 'All when they was babbies, and——"

"Now, Granfer," broke in Susan Jory, "laist said soonest mended. Remember which side yer bread es buttered."

"Look 'ere, sir," went on Granfer after a significant silence, "I do'an' knaw nothin' 'bout 'et, though I git maazed when I do think 'bout et. You zee I knawed 'em oal, so to spaik, and worked up to the 'All for more'n sixty year. All the same I do'ant knaw nothin'. Nobody do I reckon 'cipt Doctor Borlase."

"Who's Dr. Borlase?"

"He's our doctor, sir. Bin in Pendragon parish for thirty year. Come here as a young man 'ee did, and 'ee was Maaster Pendragon's friend, and ef anything es *knawed*, 'ee do knaw et. But where be 'em?—tha's wot I want to knaw."

"Where are who?"

"They pore dear cheldern?—they who should own everything, while that woman——"

"Now, Granfer——" warned Susan Jory.

After that, although Gwithian stayed a good while talking, he could gain no further information concerning the things that interested him. All the cottagers believed that his cottage was haunted, but he learnt little more from them than he had learnt from Cradock. Nevertheless he could not help believing as Granfer Crowle repeatedly asserted, that there was "summin' in it oal."

Gwithian walked away in a thoughtful frame of mind. He had come to Cornwall with the idea that he would be getting out of the world; he had fancied that he would have little or nothing to interest him. And yet no sooner had he arrived than he found himself at the heart of mysterious things.

Of course he discarded the idea that there was anything supernatural in what he had seen and heard.

And yet there must be something in it all. It was true the stories told him by Granfer Crowle and Susan Jory were little more than a repetition of what Cradock had said, but they gave him food for thought. He must examine these rooms minutely.

Of course his mind leapt to the obvious connection there might be between what Granfer Crowle had told him about the inmates of Pendragon Hall, and what he himself had seen a few hours before. Might not the late Mr. Pendragon's son and daughter have come back to visit the scenes from which they were apparently ejected?

But why should they? He could understand how, believing themselves driven from home, they should seek to visit Pendragon Hall; but why should they come to Cromlech Cottage?

No, no, that would not do. According to Grandfather Crowle's account, the cottage had been practically a ruin until Gabriel Chirgwin had fastened upon it a couple of years before, and had determined to make it a comfortable dwelling.

He laughed as he thought of the advertisement which first caught his eye, when, heartsick and angry, he had sat in Berner's Hotel.

"Ideal for those desiring a rural, peaceful country life," he repeated to himself with a laugh.

And yet it *was* rural and peaceful. A more restful scene it would be impossible to imagine; and yet he felt himself in a world of mystery.

He was going to find out what it all meant, too; he was full of eagerness to discover the secret of it all, to understand what lay at the heart of it. He would find out the whereabouts of Gabriel Chirgwin and question him as to why he left the cottage after only a week's residence. And he would learn more about the Pendragon family. Of course, it was no business of his, but since he had come to the country, and had become encircled by mystery, he would know what it all meant.

He heard the sound of a motor-engine, heard the roll of wheels, and a few seconds later a two-seater car came in sight. It contained only one occupant. The car looked as if it had done a great deal of service, while the driver was an elderly man who appeared to be perfectly familiar with the scenes by which he was surrounded. When he saw Gwithian standing at the foot of the rock he drew up at his side and stopped the car.

"Nice day," he greeted him.

"Yes," replied Gwithian; "it's glorious."

The man got out of the car and began to feel in his pockets.

"You don't happen to have a match?" he asked.

"Oceans," replied Gwithian, handing him a box.

"Thank you. Smoking is not easy when you are motoring; all the same, I like to have a pipe in my mouth."

"Bad habit," Gwithian laughed, "especially for a doctor."

"Eh? What's that? How do you know I am a doctor?"

"I am not a Sherlock Holmes; but if I mistake not, I see the outline of a stethoscope in your pocket. I therefore infer that you are a doctor. Having been told that there is only one doctor in the district and that his name is Borlase, I assume that that is your name."

The motorist laughed. He was a pleasant-looking man with ruddy cheeks, and white hair and moustache. But he was more than pleasant. Gwithian judged by his eyes, twinkling merrily as they did, that he was a keen observer, a quick thinker. There was an air of decision about him, too, and he looked capable.

"Yes, my name is Borlase—Doctor Borlase, as every one calls me; while you are Mr. Gwithian Trewithen, the new occupant of Cromlech Cottage. One need not be a Sherlock Holmes to come to that conclusion."

There was laughter in the doctor's face, a sense of humour in his very presence. Gwithian felt at home with him.

"Busy this morning, Doctor?"

"Always busy," laughed the other. "It would be a bad advertisement for a doctor if anyone imagined him to be idle."

"Are you too busy to come up to my cottage and smoke a cigar with me? You see, I am a new-comer and naturally want to know something about my neighbours. You live at Pendragon, don't you?"

"Delighted," replied the doctor. "I will leave this old bus here and walk up with you. It'll be all over the parish by to-morrow that you have consulted me about your health."

"Yes, how's that?"

"They are all watching us," laughed the doctor as he nodded to the three cottages near by. "You don't look over well, but you don't want to consult me about your health. All the same, I expect you have a lot of questions to ask me."

"I shall take you as a relation of Sherlock Holmes presently," laughed Gwithian.

He instinctively felt that he was going to learn something.

CHAPTER IV

THE WILL

"BY Jove!" exclaimed the doctor as they came to the front of Cromlech Cottage, "it's a gem."

"It *is* a gem," assented Gwithian.

"Such places are rare. I don't think there are a half a dozen

in the county. Even two years ago before old Chirgwin bought it, it intrigued me. Of course, it was falling to pieces, while the garden was a wilderness; but anyone could see the possibilities of it; anyhow, Chirgwin did. He restored it beautifully. He was an architect and an artist."

"Did you know him?"

"Yes and no; but of course he was an architect. He superintended all the work himself, and see how perfectly he did it. Why, you can hardly see where the old ends and the new begins. He has caught the spirit of three hundred years ago."

"Why did he leave it?" asked Gwithian.

The doctor turned his sharp, searching eyes upon him and looked at him steadily.

"What do you know?" he asked sharply.

"I knew nothing about the place when I took it," replied Gwithian, "but I have heard since that he stayed here only a week. Why did he leave it?"

"Ask me another," replied the doctor. "Meanwhile, if you don't mind, let's go inside."

Gwithian led the way into the house.

"Of course, you know you are the most talked-of man in the parish," remarked the doctor a few minutes later as, seated in one of the arm-chairs, he thoughtfully pulled at his cigar.

"I can see that I might be."

"You are. Susan Jory is as good as a town crier, and when she received instructions from Polkinhorne of Truro to come up here, open the windows, and make the place fit for habitation because a Mr. Gwithian Trewithen had taken it, you immediately became a benefactor to the neighbourhood."

"Yes?"

"You see, you gave us all something to talk about."

"Of course, I know that the cottage is reputed to be haunted; but surely you do not believe that?"

"I don't know," replied the doctor slowly.

"You mean——?"

"I mean nothing. You came last night, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Did you see anything, hear anything?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because it was full moon, and according to legendary history, whenever the place is haunted, it is on the three nights before full moon, at full moon, and the three nights after. As it was full moon last night, I am curious. That's why I drove around

this way this morning. That's why, if you had not been standing by the Cromlech Rock, I should have come up here and called on you. You have heard the stories, I suppose?"

"I heard a great deal of what Granfer Crowle and Susan Jory could tell me."

"Just so. Do you think you will be able to stand it?"

Gwithian laughed. There, in the light of that glorious forenoon, with the summer countryside stretched out before him, the question seemed absurd.

The doctor looked at him scrutinizingly. "You need a little more flesh," he said, laughing; "and you look as though you have gone through a rough time. Have you?"

"I have been in one of the most unhealthy parts of Africa for more than two years," replied Gwithian. "I have had several attacks of malaria, and I have had a rough time generally. During my homeward voyage I was so ill that I had to keep in my cabin a good deal, and when I got to London my cards didn't turn up trumps. Does that answer you?"

"Partly. Still you have a splendid physique, and a fine constitution. More than that, you look like a fellow who has sound judgment, and, when you are in good health, steady nerves. Have you any profession?"

"A mining engineer."

"That sounds all right. But I am afraid you will not be able to stand it,—I am quite serious."

"But surely——" Gwithian began to protest.

"Yes, I know what you would say," interrupted the doctor. "And of course, speaking as a common-sense, fairly well educated man, I agree with you. The whole thing is too absurd for words. But mark you, Chirgwin was an intelligent man, and as hard-headed as they make 'em:—eccentric if you like, but steady as old Time. From what I learn he was simply a maniac about Jacobean architecture. He just revelled in it. I am told that when he saw this place he fell in love with it. I suppose he saw its possibilities. Having retired from his profession and being possessed of ample means, he spared no pains or expense to make the place what it is. He secured a few excellent mechanics who lodged at Pendragon village, while he himself motored over daily from Truro. Of course, twenty or thirty miles is nothing in a motor-car. He secured two middle-aged women as servants, had everything got ready, and took up his residence here. The two women stayed only one night."

"Did you see them?" asked Gwithian.

"I was called in the following morning; they were hysterical, —almost out of their minds. They told me a wild fandango of nonsense;—but they wouldn't stay, they left before the day was out."

"Did they give you any particulars?"

"I could gather nothing definite, but I judged that they heard strange noises, saw ghastly faces, ghostly forms. You see, they were so hysterical that they couldn't speak coherently. And Chirgwin——"

"Yes, Chirgwin?—what of him?"

"He was angry, out of patience; he scornfully denied their stories. But he left in a week."

"Doctor," said Gwithian after a long silence, "do you think there is any connection between those stories about Pendragon Hall and all this rubbish you have been telling me?"

"What do you know about Pendragon Hall?" asked the doctor quickly.

"Just before seeing you I had a long talk with Granfer Crowle. He told me things which I suppose are generally believed in the district about the Pendragons. He said you knew all about it."

"What did he tell you?" asked the doctor.

Gwithian repeated the old man's story about the children. "Is it true?" he asked.

"More or less," replied the doctor. "The facts are these. Old Granfer was mainly right about the estate. The Pendragons are, as you know, a very old Cornish family, and they lived up at the old house for many generations. But they played ducks and drakes with the property. They mortgaged it until not one sixpence more could be raised on it. Then the last of the Pendragons, that is of the old family, died, and left little but debts. What would have become of the place I don't know, but the grandfather of the late owner came here some time during the last century and bought everything as it stood. I don't know the details of it, it was before my time; but he certainly called himself Roger Pendragon, and he was evidently a rich man. The place which had gone to rack and ruin was restored; farm-houses were rebuilt; new cottages were erected and the whole estate put into good order. He had one son, also called Roger, who succeeded him, and married a Tresillian. This young couple also had one son who became my friend, the owner of Pendragon Hall. He married a Miss Fortescue, one of the loveliest girls in the county; yes, and one of the sweetest. Old Granfer Crowle was correct in his description of her. A year

after they were married twins were born to them, whom I brought into the world. The young mother lived to see her children and that was all. I hardly like to think of that time. I was afraid my friend would go mad. You see, he loved his wife almost to distraction; he fairly worshipped her."

"Awfully sad," remarked Gwithian.

"Sad! I should think it was. Here he was, a young man left with those two babies. Bonnie babies they were, a boy and a girl. The boy was called Roger after his father, and the girl Karenza."

"Karenza?" repeated Gwithian. "I never heard the name before."

"I suppose not. It's an old Cornish word which means love. I don't think he would have thought of it, but his wife made him promise a few days before, that if their child was a girl she should be called Karenza. When you come to think of it, it's a lovely name. Karenza—Love. I, as his nearest friend and doctor, had to manage everything. I engaged a nurse for them, looked after them in every way. For months my friend was unable to do anything; he was too overwhelmed. Presently, however, the love he had given to his wife he devoted to his children. They were his idols, idols which almost he worshipped. Then trouble came. He made friends with a woman, a young widow with two children called Trounce. I needn't go into details. The first moment I saw them together I was afraid. I could see she was a clever, fascinating, scheming woman. I don't know how it was, but I think she mesmerized him. She made him feel that the children wanted a mother, and that she was the one woman in the world fit to be their mother. Anyhow, he married her, and thus she became mistress of Pendragon Hall. She hadn't been there long before she showed her hand. I could see that she hated Roger and Karenza; that she was jealous of their position; that she was scheming for her own children."

"I think I can understand the situation," remarked Gwithian.

"Of course you can. My friend was not a strong man, and she was a clever woman. He became afraid of her; afraid even to caress his own boy and girl in her presence. Oh, it makes me mad as I think of it!"

The doctor was silent for a time, and then went on again.

"I can't explain it even to myself. I can't understand it, although I have spent hours trying to think it out. Anyhow, the upshot of the business was that his own children were sent away to school."

"To school?" queried Gwithian.

"To school,—call it what you like. Anyhow, she persuaded him to send those two kiddies to a man and woman who took in a few children to board and educate. Fancy it; the heir of the Pendragon estates, sent with his sister to a far-off place like that, while that woman's children reigned at home."

"How many children did you say his second wife had?"

"Two; a boy and a girl, nearly the same age as Roger Pendragon's own."

"Well, what happened then?"

"Nothing seemed to happen—for they never once returned during the years they were at this school."

"And the father consented to that?"

"I think he was glad to consent to it. You see, that woman made those children's lives such a hell that he was glad to get them away from her presence. Anyhow, he was presently taken ill. I believe she wanted another doctor, but my friend insisted that I should be sent for. No sooner did I enter that bedroom than I feared the worst. The man had the stamp of death upon him. I tried to get that woman out of the room, but she wouldn't go. She insisted on staying near us. But I managed to get just a few seconds alone with him. While I was examining him I placed my ear close to his lips. It seems like sacrilege to repeat his words, and yet I don't know why it should be. He said, 'I have made a Will, Borlase; Trefry drew it up. I have left practically everything to Roger and Karenza. Of course, I have settled enough on my wife to make her comfortable for life, but at her death everything goes to Roger and Karenza. I have done right, haven't I?' 'You have done quite right, Roger, old friend,' I said, 'but we are not going to let you die yet.'"

The doctor hastily drew the back of his hand across his eyes; evidently his memories affected him deeply.

"He didn't get better," he went on at length; "within a week he was dead."

A long silence fell between the two men. Gwithian had become tremendously interested in the story he had heard; he might have had some personal connection with it all, and he eagerly waited for the other to continue.

"What I am going to tell you now," continued the doctor presently, "is not public property. The funeral was out of the ordinary. I don't know how it was arranged, but my friend was buried in the Pendragon family vault near the Altar of the old Church. I suppose it had been proved that he belonged to the same family. Be that as it may, it was so. It was a large

funeral and many of the leading families of the county were represented. I, as the family doctor, was invited to be present, and what interested me more than anything else was that the two children, Roger and Karenza, were also there. That was something like nine years ago." Again the doctor hesitated, and another silence fell between them.

"They had been brought home from school, I suppose?" Gwithian inquired.

"They had been brought home from where they had been," replied the doctor. "They were now sixteen years of age, and a handsomer couple it would be difficult to find. Indeed, young Roger, although a boy in years, would have been taken anywhere for eighteen. He stood six feet high and was splendidly proportioned. Karenza was still a child, but a beautiful child. Dark, clear complexion, almost black flashing eyes, perfectly moulded features, surmounted by a crown of glorious hair. I did not speak to them till after the funeral; I had no opportunity; but I remember thinking what fine-looking children they were. They were intelligent too; it was impossible not to realize that. I wondered what would happen when the contents of the will were made known, for I remembered what my friend had told me."

"Exactly," assented Gwithian. He was impatient at the other's slowness in telling his story.

"I noticed that Lawyer Trefry was at the funeral, and not a little excited. After the funeral we went back to Pendragon Hall. There were only a few of us in the room. There were the widow, her two brothers, Roger and Karenza, besides Trefry and myself.

"'Have you brought the will, Mr. Trefry?' the widow asked of the lawyer.

"'Yes,' replied Trefry, 'I have it here,' and he took it from his pocket. 'You know of its contents, of course?'

"'I know nothing,' replied the widow. 'My late husband told me that I was well provided for, but nothing more.'

"I saw that on the envelope was written the words 'The Last Will and Testament of Roger Pendragon of Pendragon Hall. April 13th, 1910.'

"'I remember writing those words myself,' said Mr. Trefry as he placed the document on the table."

"It would be quite a dramatic moment," remarked Gwithian.

"It was. The whole scene comes back to me now. We were sitting in the library. Trefry was at the head of the table, while on his right hand sat the widow. On his left were the two children, Roger and Karenza. I came next, while on the other

side of the widow were her two brothers. I could see that the children were watching the lawyer eagerly. The widow's face was impassive and as fixed as marble.

"The lawyer began to read. At first the words passed from his lips glibly. They were the usual prelude to the real contents. Presently, however, he stopped and stammered. He read like a man who was uncertain; he did not seem sure of what was coming next.

"'I can't make out this,' I heard him murmur; 'this is not——'

"And then I saw him put his right hand to his head like one bewildered.

"'What can't you understand?' asked the widow quietly. She was the only person in the room who appeared perfectly calm. 'You drew up the will yourself not three years ago.'

"'Yes, yes, I know,' gasped Trefry. 'Of course it's all right, but as I remember the draft——'

"But I could see he was frightened, bewildered. He had had a paralytic stroke some time before and some said that his powers were affected.

"Well, with the same fearful look in his eyes he read on to the end, while all the rest of us sat still. When he came to the last words, 'Signed Roger Pendragon, witnessed by Thomas Trefry, Solicitor; Adam Chignoweth, Solicitor's clerk; Thomas Brown, Butler,' I could see him gasping for breath, while the perspiration oozed from his forehead. He looked like a man who had lost his senses."

"Why should he?" asked Gwithian.

"Why should he? *Because the Pendragon Estates, and every penny of which he was possessed, were given to his 'dearly beloved wife, Anna Pendragon,' while the names of his own children were not even mentioned.*"

"But didn't Mr. Roger Pendragon tell you that he had given practically everything to his two children?" cried Gwithian.

"Of course he did, and that was why I was speechless with astonishment. But what could I say? There was the will duly executed. There was not a flaw in it, as far as I could see; and it was read to us by the testator's own lawyer. More than that, it was witnessed by the lawyer himself, the lawyer's own confidential clerk, and by the Pendragon butler. There was no doubt of its legality, no doubt of its being in order in every respect. And yet, I was sure the old lawyer was perturbed, bewildered by it. He did not seem sure of himself, or certain of the words he read."

"Well, what happened then?"

"Nothing much happened—on the surface. The young people who had expected to be the chief beneficiaries sat with frozen-like faces, never speaking a word. The widow and her two brothers were also silent. For my own part I felt as though I would have given everything I possessed not to be there. Remembering what my friend had told me, I felt like rising and protesting; but I dared not. You must remember that Roger Pendragon had only just been buried, while we sat there listening to his will."

"But what did you do?"

"We did nothing; we simply sat still; dumb and helpless. After a minute or so, the widow, who had been calm and collected the whole time, turned to Roger and Karenza and said quietly:

"'Evidently your father expected me to look after you. I will see to it that you have an allowance made to help you to complete your education, after which you will doubtless want to earn your own living. You will, of course, stay the night here, but in the morning I dare say you will want to go back to school again?'

"Then she turned to her brothers, who went out of the room with her, leaving Trefry, the two children and myself together."

"By Jove, that was a backhander!" exclaimed Gwithian.

"I turned to Trefry," went on the doctor, "and I asked him what it meant. 'My memory, Doctor! My memory is leaving me!' he wailed piteously. 'I must look into it.' But beyond that I could get nothing from him. He looked at me helplessly, piteously; but he would say nothing."

"But the boy and the girl?" said Gwithian. "What did they do?"

"It was pitiful to see them," cried the doctor. "I don't think they realized what the terms of the will meant to them; at any rate, I am sure it wasn't that which troubled them. What *did* trouble them was that their father shouldn't mention them."

"'Doctor Borlase,' said the girl piteously, 'he told us the last time he came to see us that practically everything was left to us; didn't he, Roger? He told us that he had made a will; that Mr. Trefry had drawn it up, and that practically everything was left to us. And what was more,' cried Karenza, 'he asked our forgiveness for having married that woman. He said he had made a mistake in doing it, but that he had done it out of love for us. Then he assured us that everything would be right, and that whatever happened to him, Pendragon Hall was to

be ours. I am sure my father wouldn't make a will without mentioning us!'

"'There must be another will,' I cried, 'another will which will nullify this!'

"Trefry shook his head. 'I only made one will,' he said, 'only one. I brought it to him in this very room, and Adam Chignoweth came with me.'

"'And is this your signature?' I asked.

"'Yes, it's my signature.'

"'You are certain?'

"'Certain.'

"'And is this Adam Chignoweth's signature?'

"'There is not the slightest doubt about it, and the date is correct too. But—but—oh, my memory must be going.'

"'What do you mean by that?' I asked. 'Have you any doubt about it?'

"'No, no doubt at all,' he said piteously, 'and yet——'

"Again he looked like a man trying to remember something."

"Well, and what happened after that?" asked Gwithian.

"In a way nothing happened," replied the doctor, "at least, for some hours. The boy and the girl left the house. Where they went I don't know. I have never seen, nor had a line from them since. As for Trefry, he was found that same night in his own office unable to speak or move. He had had another stroke of paralysis from which he never recovered. Indeed, he never spoke again."

"It's a strange story," remarked Gwithian after a long silence.

"It *is* a strange story. Why I've related it to you, a stranger, I don't know. But you asked me to tell you about it, and yielding to impulse I have done so. How does it strike you? Sometimes an outsider, hearing a thing for the first time, can see points unthought of by one who has been brooding over it for years."

"Let me ask you a few questions, Doctor, and then I will tell you what I think," replied the young man.

CHAPTER V

GWITHIAN VISITS PENDRAGON CHURCH

"YOU say you have never seen nor had any communication with either of those two young people since the day Mr. Pendragon was buried?" queried Gwithian.

"Not once."

"And Mrs. Pendragon; she is still up at the Hall with her son and daughter?"

"Yes. Young Trounce is popular in the parish; so is the girl, Marjorie Trounce. As for Mrs. Pendragon, she is the lady bountiful of the whole district. She does a great deal of good, and you hear nothing but good of her."

"Do you ever go to Pendragon Hall?"

"Never; but there is nothing remarkable in that. She did not like me before her husband died, and I only went as his friend and doctor; not as hers."

"And of course the affair has been commented on in the parish?"

"Naturally. What Granfer Crowle told you is generally talked about in the parish."

"And what is generally *believed*?"

"To put it into a few words, it is believed that my friend was practically hypnotized into making that will. But of course it is nothing but gossip, and there is no proof of anything. The fact remains that probate was taken, the will registered in Somerset House and the woman made possessor of everything. But of this I am certain. My friend believed he had given everything to those two children. He was very ill at the time he told me this, but he was sane, as sane as I am now. My own belief is that there is some devilry at the back of it all. In fact, I am certain there is."

"But you have no proof?"

"No proof that would stand ten minutes in a Court of Law. All the same, I am sure of it. My friend, although he wanted to be loyal to his wife, as good as admitted to me that he made a mistake in marrying her, and that he sent away his children because she made their lives a hell. He told me almost with his dying breath that he had made a will giving practically everything to them."

"Has that never come to light?" interposed Gwithian.

"No. But think of what I told you concerning Trefry's behaviour. The will he read frightened him, bewildered him. He seemed to know nothing of it, and yet he confessed to having drawn it up."

"By the way, you said he spoke of a draft of the will. Was it ever found?"

"Not that I know of."

"And what became of the man Chignoweth?"

"He's still living. He was an old man at the time of Lawyer

Trefry's death, and directly afterwards he retired. He went to live with his daughter who had married a farmer some distance up the county. Oh, I have thought of all that; I went to see Chignoweth, I asked him all sorts of questions."

"And what did he tell you?"

"He seemed rather hazy about it, but he assured me that the will he witnessed gave everything to the widow."

"There you are, then."

"Yes, yes, I know. All the same, I can't believe it. There is devilry at the back of it all. Don't you think so? By the way, you told me that when I had given you particulars about the affair you would tell me what you thought. What is it?"

"I am afraid it won't throw much light on what you have been telling me," replied Gwithian; "but it may give some explanation as to why this house has the reputation of being haunted. Let me tell you what happened to me last night, and then you can judge for yourself."

Thereupon he told the doctor of his experiences of the previous night; told how he had been awakened by heartrending cries; how he had looked out of the window and seen the contorted features of what seemed like a human being; told how this was followed by the sound of footsteps and then the apparition of a female form.

"And you saw and heard all this?" asked the doctor.

Gwithian nodded.

"You are certain?"

"As certain as that I am sitting here."

"And what explanation do you give?"

"Doctor," said Gwithian, "I am not a believer in ghosts. I am one of those materialistic fellows who believes that whatever he sees has some tangible reality. Might not that man and that woman who appeared to me last night be Roger and Karenza Pendragon, who believe as you do about their father's will, and are determined to discover the truth of it? It may be that they have their own reasons for coming in such a mysterious way; but may not they be the cause of all the gossip about this house being haunted? Of course, I know nothing about the rights or wrongs of the will, or of the disposition of the family property, but I can quite see they believe they have been defrauded of their rights and——"

"They have decided to come back as 'ghosts,'" interrupted the doctor a little scornfully. "No, it won't do."

"Why won't it do?"

"For several reasons. First, because this house had the reputation of being haunted long before Roger Pendragon died. Second, because no connection can be traced between this cottage and that business. Just think, my dear fellow; why should they come here? Why should they stand jibbering outside the front door of your cottage? It could lead to nothing. And third—and this once and for all puts an end to your theory—young Roger Pendragon is dead."

"Dead!" cried Gwithian.

"Yes, he was killed in the war. I told you just now that I had seen nor heard nothing from them, and I spoke the truth; but I have heard about them. News came to me toward the end of the war that Roger had been killed in Egypt."

"Have you any proof of that?"

"Unfortunately I have. I wrote to the War Office and got the news confirmed. As for Karenza, I have the best of reasons for believing that she is married and is at this time living somewhere up in Scotland."

"Of course that knocks my theory into smithereens," laughed Gwithian after a few seconds' silence; "but it explains nothing."

"No, it explains nothing," admitted the doctor; "and what you have told me is funny—dashed funny. What time did you see this?"

"About two o'clock in the morning."

"And you saw—what you say?"

"I could swear in a Court of Law to what I have told you."

"Would you recognize the man if you were to see him again?"

"I wouldn't swear to that. You see, although it was bright moonlight it was different from daylight, and the man was partly in the shadow of that tree there," and he pointed out of the window; "but I think I should recognize him again."

"And you say that the woman who appeared a minute later was different; altogether different. What was she like?"

"She was, as far as I could judge, of ordinary height and build, but I could not judge very well. She seemed to be wearing a dark shawl. But I saw her face plainly."

"What kind of a face?"

"A beautiful face. Yes, I mean it. Of course I could not judge of her complexion, but her features were perfectly formed, and she had a wonderful head of hair."

"Did you think of her as a working woman?"

"No. She appeared plainly garbed, but I thought of her as a lady. She bore the stamp of refinement. The thing that

impressed me most was the look of unutterable sadness on her face, and in her eyes."

"How old should you think she was?"

"A young woman; little more than a girl. Anywhere between twenty and twenty-five."

The doctor shook his head. "I can't think of anyone in Pendragon parish, or in the whole district, to correspond with your description," he said presently. "They must be strangers —if they were human," he added.

"I am going to find out the meaning of it all."

The doctor rose to his feet and held out his hand. "Well, I wish you luck," he said with a laugh; "and I hope you will get to the bottom of it. By the way, I am a lonely man, a bachelor, and I shall be ever so glad if you will come to Pendragon and see me sometimes. Beyond the parson I have no one to talk to."

"What kind of man is the parson?"

"Quite a good chap; can't preach for nuts, but he's a good fellow for all that. Very likely he will be calling on you."

"I am awfully interested in what you have told me about that Pendragon affair," Gwithian said, as he accompanied the doctor to the gate. "I wonder if anything will ever come to light to upset that woman's position at the big house?"

The doctor shook his head. "It's impossible now," he replied. "You see, she's been established there for nine years as complete owner. No, no, her position is impregnable; nothing but the discovery of another will, later than the one I described to you, could shake her position. And that's out of the question after what Trefry said."

"I suppose it is; but strange things happen sometimes."

"What can happen? The woman is firmly established. She is accepted as the natural owner of the place. It was plainly stated in the will. Who's to dispute her position? Even if young Roger Pendragon were alive he could do nothing. For nine years she has been the undisputed owner, and in any case possession is nine points of the law."

"Of course, you are right," admitted Gwithian. "All the same, the whole affair frightfully intrigues me. Good morning, Doctor. Call again soon."

During the next three days nothing happened to disturb the serenity of Trewithen's life. The weather continued fine, and the pure air of the countryside brought him health and healing. There were no further nocturnal visits at Cromlech Cottage, and

even Cradock, who had at first seemed certain that they would never be able to stay there, began to be hopeful. Susan Jory came each day to help him in his household work, and as nothing happened during the night to disturb his peace, Cradock's fears were beginning to be dispelled.

"Not that I can understand it even yet," he declared to Gwithian, after confessing that since the first night everything had gone well. "I don't believe we are at the end of our troubles."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean, sir, that if this house has been visited by spirits all these years, they'll come again, sir. It's true we have heard nothing for the last few nights, but it's early days to talk yet. Ah, that's better."

"What's better?"

"Don't you see, sir? There's a clergyman coming up the path. I expect it's the Vicar of the parish. Susan Jory was telling a story yesterday about the ghost of a dead man being laid by a parson. Perhaps he can lay our ghosts, sir. There, that's his knock. Shall I show him in, sir?"

"By all means. It's nearly tea-time, too. Bring in some tea at four o'clock."

"I hope you will excuse me for calling," remarked the visitor on entering; "but I am the Vicar of the parish and thought I would look you up."

He was a comparatively young man and Gwithian felt friendly toward him immediately.

"My name is Moss," he went on, "but I hope I am not what the Americans call 'mossbacked.' My parishioners often find fault with me because I am too much up to date."

"Well, Cornwall seems an up-to-date county," remarked Gwithian.

"Surely you, living in this old house, would not call Pendragon up to date?" retorted the other.

"I don't know as to that," laughed Gwithian. "I suppose that electricity and electric power generally is one of our most modern discoveries, and I am arranging to have electric light in this cottage."

"I am glad of it," laughed the Vicar. "I hope it will frighten the bogeys."

"Are there bogeys here?" queried Gwithian. He asked this because he wanted to know if the Vicar could throw any light upon the stories he had heard.

"Of course, I know nothing beyond what is common to the

parish ; but every one says you must be brave to live here. I congratulate you on possessing the place. It's one of the loveliest cottages I have ever seen, and I must confess that you have made yourself comfortable here."

" Unfortunately it isn't mine ; for the time being at all events, I am only renting it. But you haven't answered my question about the bogeys."

" Of course, you have heard of Mr. Chirgwin's experiences. It is said by the parish people that he was driven out of the house in less than a week, while his servants stayed only one night."

Cradock brought in tea just then, so their conversation was diverted to other channels ; and even when they again reverted to the reputation of the cottage, Gwithian learnt nothing. All that Mr. Moss was able to tell him was simply a rehash of the stories he had heard before.

" But it's strange how these old stories do stick," the Vicar ventured presently. " In spite of all you can say or do the people will believe in them. For that matter, after I had heard the minute details concerning what has happened here I nearly believed in them myself. I was talking with Susan Jory only last week, who had just heard of your coming, and really, she made me believe, in spite of myself, in the authenticity of these appearances."

" She advises me to get you to come down and lay the ghost," laughed Gwithian.

" Yes, she suggested that to me also. And do you know I find in looking over some old parish records that one of my predecessors actually did profess to lay a ghost in this very parish." Whereupon Mr. Moss went on to give details of the story. " There is a gravestone erected in the churchyard where the man was buried," he went on, " and underneath the particulars of his life and death are written the words, ' He is *now* at peace,' with the ' now ' in italics. And that reminds me. The Earl of Pendragon, who at one time lived in this cottage, was buried in the family vault in my church. The Pendragons, as you know, are a very old family. The vault is near the altar, and there are some interesting old records about it."

" I should like to see that vault very much."

" And I should be delighted to show it you. Why, the late Mr. Pendragon was also buried there. The church is sadly in need of renovation, but it is one of the most interesting in Cornwall, and one of the oldest. I'd give my eyes to see it properly restored."

" Why don't you get it restored ? "

"For the want of money, my dear sir—for the want of money; and the want of general interest, too, for that matter. For one thing, the great bulk of the people in the parish are Methodists of some sort, and for another I can't get Mrs. Pendragon, who is the only moneyed person in the parish, to be interested. Still, it's worth seeing."

"I'd love to see it," Gwithian asseverated.

"Any time, my dear sir. Any time that you are our way I shall be delighted to show you over it. But I must be going now. The Archdeacon is staying with me to-night, and as he will arrive in an hour and a half from now I must get back."

"Let me drive you," Gwithian said; "the car is outside the gate, and I can get you there in five minutes. Then perhaps you will have time to show me this very evening."

"That would be delightful," the Vicar said.

A few minutes they had left the car at the churchyard gate, while Gwithian and Mr. Moss were making their way toward the old edifice.

The church was very small. All told it would not seat more than a hundred and fifty people. But there was an air of calm dignity about it, nevertheless. As the Vicar had said, it was one of the oldest churches in Cornwall, being built in pre-Reformation days on the site of a still older building. It sadly needed repair, and yet, perhaps for that very reason, it was far more interesting than many churches, the beauty of which had been destroyed by the restorer's hands. At any rate, there were no gaudy pitch-pine pews, or glutinous tiles upon the altar. It was just a House of God in the middle of a country village. Even Gwithian, who could not ordinarily be called a spiritually-minded man, felt that in such a building one could find peace, and would be helped to commune with his Maker.

"If ever you get this place restored," he said, "for Heaven's sake don't put in pitch-pine pews or modern tiles. The glory of the church is in its age. Keep that feeling, whatever you do."

"I will try," the Vicar replied with a smile.

"For another thing," went on Gwithian, "don't get the place plastered. Let the old grey granite rocks be in evidence; don't try to make it look up to date."

"May God forgive me if I do," replied the Vicar.

"He'll find it hard. I am not a church-going man, but I have visited no less than five since I have been in the county. Each one of them has been what is called 'restored,' and each one has been spoiled."

Mr. Moss showed him a list of Vicars who had served in the parish from the eleventh century. Those from about 1070 to 1150 bore French names and appeared to be men of position and wealth. From 1520 to 1570 there seemed to be uncertainty on the part of those who compiled the list; dates were absent, and from 1525 to 1535 there seemed to be no record at all.

On the opposite wall Gwithian saw the well-known letter which Charles I wrote during his struggle with Cromwell; especially was he interested in reference to the loyalty and heroism of the Cornish people.

"It's strange, isn't it?" remarked the Vicar as they read. "I suppose the Cornish were the last people in the country to accept the Reformation, but once they accepted it they became ardent believers. Indeed, so strongly did they hold to the ideas of the Church of England after the Elizabethan settlement that they would have no change. No part of the country was more loyal to Charles I than Cornwall, and the people opposed Cromwell almost to a man, as that letter of Charles testifies. Yet, when John Wesley came they easily drank in his doctrines until now I suppose it is one of the most Nonconformist counties in England. Why is it?"

"I give it up," laughed Gwithian.

"Here we are," said the Vicar at length. "This part of the church has been largely given up to the Pendragons. As you see, the family has been prominent in the parish for centuries."

Gwithian looked around him and saw that the Vicar spoke the truth. Brasses on the walls and stones lying flat on the ground proclaimed the fact.

"But there is the Pendragon family vault," the Vicar added, as he pointed to the floor.

Looking, Gwithian saw a stone slab which might be about five feet long and three feet broad. On it were carved names which during the years had become well-nigh obliterated, but at the bottom of the slab were words easily deciphered.

"Also beneath this stone and waiting a joyful resurrection, lie the mortal remains of Roger Pendragon of Pendragon Hall of this Parish. Born May 1st, 1861. Died July 7th, 1913."

Gwithian could not understand why, but a shiver passed through him as he read the words. He felt something as he had felt on the night of his coming to his cottage when, looking out of the window, he had seen ghostly forms. It seemed to him that a strange, uncanny presence was near him, that some influence alien to this life pervaded the church. It had come

upon him suddenly, and apparently without reason. He had often, when visiting old churches, tried to decipher the names of the people who had been buried in them; but he had never felt like this before. Everything was natural, yet everything was unnatural. By his side stood Mr. Moss, who, although dressed in clerical attire, was one of the most unclerical parsons he had ever seen. He suggested nothing ghostly, and yet it seemed to the young man as though ghostly presences were all around him. So much did he feel this, that he would not have been surprised if some unearthly form had appeared to him.

"Strange, isn't it?" he whispered.

"What's strange?" asked the Vicar.

"Don't you feel it?" he again whispered.

"I feel nothing out of the ordinary. What is there to feel?"

He wanted to get away, and yet he seemed rooted to the ground. Even then, he knew he did not believe in the supernatural, and yet something supernatural possessed him, held him fast. Then, as he looked, he thought he saw something outlined. Clearer and clearer it became until he could have sworn that something in the shape of a hand and arm appeared to him, while the forefinger of the hand pointed to the vault.

Suddenly the influence, or whatever it was, left him. Everything became commonplace again; he was simply standing in an old-time church looking at a slab which lay over the vault appertaining to an ancient family. No suggestion of ghostly presences remained; he had become cynical and unbelieving again.

"This," said the Vicar, in a matter-of-fact way, "is the Pendragon pew. It has been occupied by the Pendragons from time out of mind."

"And the Pendragons still sit there, I suppose?"

"Not often. Mrs. Pendragon comes occasionally, but the son and daughter rarely. I suppose that in the old days the family never failed to come to church. For that matter, I suppose Mr. Roger Pendragon, who lies there"—and the Vicar pointed to the vault—"was also a very devout man, and never failed to attend Divine Service. But that was before my day. You see, I did not come here until five years ago, and he died in 1913."

"How comes it," asked Gwithian, "that Mr. Roger Pendragon, who did not belong to the ancient Pendragon family, was buried there?"

"I am afraid I haven't studied ecclesiastical law," replied the Vicar, "but I imagine that when the present Pendragons

became possessors of the Pendragon estates they would also become possessors of the family vault. For another thing, although I have not inquired into it, I am informed that the grandfather of the late family was able to prove that he sprung from the same stock."

"I suppose," remarked Gwithian, remembering what the doctor had told him, "that there are strange stories afloat about the disposition of the property?"

"I have heard some gossip," replied the Vicar, "but have paid no attention to it. There always are stories about such matters, but they are generally unworthy of credence."

As they passed out of the old porch together and looked toward the churchyard gates they saw standing near Gwithian's car a young man, and a girl who might be three or four years younger.

"That's Harold Trounce and his sister," whispered the Vicar. "I will introduce you."

"Trounce?" repeated Gwithian.

"Yes, Trounce, the son and daughter of Mrs. Trounce, now Mrs. Pendragon."

Gwithian walked toward them with quickened footsteps, he had suddenly become strangely interested in these young people.

CHAPTER VI

THE PENDRAGONS

MR. HAROLD TROUNCE appeared to be about twenty-five years of age. He was good-looking, well set up, and well tailored. Gwithian was not altogether favourably impressed by him, but had he been asked the reason he could not have told why. Evidently he was the product of a public school and University, possibly Eton and Oxford. There was nothing particularly noticeable about him except that he appeared somewhat aggressive, while the fact of his being heir to the Pendragon estates might have given him a sense of superiority to anyone else in the parish.

The girl, however, appealed to him more favourably. She was good-looking, laughing-eyed, more than ordinarily tall and well developed, and appeared frank and likeable.

"Mr. Trewithen," the Vicar explained to them after the introduction had taken place, "is the new tenant of Cromlech Cottage."

"Good for you," exclaimed Trounce at this information. "It's a jolly old spot. All the same, I am hanged if I would

like to sleep there. Of course, I don't believe in ghosts and all that kind of rot, but the stories one has heard are enough to make one's flesh creep."

"Have you ever been in the place?" asked Gwithian.

"No, but I have passed it hosts of times. I'd jolly well like to."

"Well, why not? Chirgwin must have spent no end of money on the place, and he's made it jolly comfortable."

"That he has," confirmed the Vicar. "He must have been something of a sybarite."

"And then left it at the end of a week," laughed Trounce. "What on earth led you to come there, Mr. Trewithen? I hear you are installed at the old place with an old family servant, and are defying all the ghosts of generations. Have you seen any yet?"

Gwithian shook his head. "Why should ghosts bother me?" he asked.

"There seems no reason why they should," assented Trounce, "but as I said, there are some jolly funny stories afloat. Come to that, I am rather interested in the place. Up to two or three years ago I suppose it belonged to my mother and was part of the Pendragon estates. It is said, too, that one of the old Earls of Pendragon lived there for some years; lived like a hermit according to accounts. But I never thought anything about it until Chirgwin bought it from my mother and set to work to restore it."

"Nor I," laughed the girl. "I wish I had. Do you know, Mr. Moss, I'd love to see a ghost."

"Why?" asked the Vicar.

"It would make one feel sure that there is something after death."

"And don't you feel sure now?"

"Of course I don't. No one does. I suppose lots of people accept it as a traditional belief, but nothing more."

"Is that why you so seldom come to church?" the Vicar queried with a smile.

"Perhaps it is," was her reply. "Do you know, Mr. Moss, during my last term at school some of the older girls got frightfully interested in spiritualism, and we had what they called a *séance*. But nothing happened."

"No?"

"No. And I have been to several since, in London, but it's always the same. Nothing of that sort ever happens to me. A

medium once told me that I should never see anything; that I was an antagonistic force because I wasn't psychic. Are you psychic, Mr. Trewithen?"

"Perhaps I should be if I knew what it was," replied the young man; "but I don't. What is it?"

"I am afraid I don't know either, but I am told that psychic people possess that something which makes them sensitive to spiritual presences. How there can be a spiritual presence I don't know; but that's what I am told. Oh, I do hope you will see some ghosts, Mr. Trewithen. Will you tell me if you do?"

"If you will tell me why you ask me?"

"Because I want to see one. If you really see one I want you to invite me to your house so that I may not miss such an experience."

"I say, Marj!" protested Trounce.

"Well, why shouldn't he? It would be no end of a joke. Of course, Mr. Moss would come too, and there would be heaps of fun."

"I wonder!" remarked the Vicar thoughtfully.

"That's a nice bus of yours," asserted Trounce, looking toward Gwithian's motor-car. "She'll easily do fifty, won't she?"

"If she has plenty of the right kind of *spirit*," laughed Gwithian.

"Yes," laughed the Vicar; "the spirit of petrol is the spirit of this age. I sometimes fear that it is destroying the belief in all other kinds of spirits."

"Jolly good thing, too," and again young Trounce looked toward the car. "What power is she, Mr. Trewithen?"

Gwithian told him.

"And you drive yourself?" asked Marjorie. "Are you your own chauffeur?"

"I like to drive myself," replied Gwithian; "but I have arranged with a man from a garage to come over every day and attend to the cleaning and oiling."

"I should love to learn to drive," exclaimed Marjorie; "but mother won't let me. She's awfully old-fashioned, and says she doesn't believe in girls driving motor-cars. But why not?"

"Why not?" assented Gwithian.

"That's what I say," agreed Harold; "but mother sticks to her guns. I suppose she's afraid of accidents."

"I wish you would come over to our house and persuade her that it's quite safe, Mr. Trewithen. You have never had an accident, have you?"

"Not yet; but one never knows."

"And you've driven a good deal?"

"Yes, I suppose so. I drove a good deal before the war as well as during the war. I drove down from London only a few days ago," he added.

"Were you in the army?"

"I suppose every one was who was at all fit," he replied.

"And would you teach me?" asked the girl eagerly. "One feels so silly in these days not to be able to drive a car. Harold has two, but mother will never let me learn. She says she couldn't trust Harold to teach me even if she felt willing that I should drive. Do come over and persuade her, Mr. Trewithen."

She spoke in a frank, impulsive way, and it would appear that Gwithian had impressed her favourably.

"Well, I must be going now," said the Vicar. "As I told you, Mr. Trewithen, I have an appointment with the Archdeacon to-night, and my time is nearly up."

"And we must be getting home, too," added Trounce. "My mother is one of those old-fashioned people who insist on punctuality at meals."

"Can't I give you a lift?" asked Gwithian. "I have to pass your gates."

"Would you?" exclaimed the girl. "It would be sweet of you. I hoped you would ask us."

"I say, Marj!" Trounce protested again.

"Well, why not? You were awfully interested in the car before Mr. Trewithen came out, and said you would like to have one of the same make. I am going to ride beside you, Mr. Trewithen, and you must explain all about the gear change."

Gwithian took his seat at the wheel while the girl placed herself by his side. Harold Trounce got into the dicky.

The car moved swiftly and smoothly along the road and in a very short time stood at the Pendragon lodge gates.

"Shall I drive you up to the house?" asked Gwithian.

"Oh, if you would!" cried the girl. "It's just a lovely car. Harold's are just boneshakers compared with this."

A few seconds later they were moving rapidly up an ancient drive. Huge trees overshadowed them until presently they entered the park from which the old house was visible.

"Isn't it a dreary old place?" asked the girl.

"Anything but that," replied the young man. "Of course, it's old, but that adds to its charm. As for the park—why, every one of those old oak trees is an ancient literature."

"Why, you are a poet," laughed the girl, "although I never knew a tree called a literature before."

"Well, a poem if it pleases you better."

"There's mother!" cried the girl impulsively. "Mother!" she shouted, and as she waved her hand Gwithian saw the figure of a woman standing at the entrance of the house.

A few seconds later he drove up to an old, grey, granite mansion.

"Mother," cried the girl eagerly, "this is Mr. Gwithian Trewithen, who has taken Cromlech Cottage. We met him with Mr. Moss over at the church gates. He drove us home, and he has promised to teach me to drive if you will let him. You will, won't you?"

"That is a matter which requires consideration, Marjorie," replied the woman. "Of course, it's very kind of Mr. Trewithen to offer," and she looked scrutinizingly at Gwithian as she spoke.

He could not help remembering Doctor Borlase's story as he returned her gaze. Certainly at first glance there was nothing that suggested the kind of woman the doctor had hinted at. She might have been nearly fifty years of age and was certainly a handsome woman for her years. She quite accorded with his ideas of what the lady bountiful of a country parish ought to be.

That she was fond of her children no one could doubt; her every look and word suggested that she thought and lived only for them.

"You must forgive this harum-scarum girl, Mr. Trewithen," she said; "she is as irresponsible as a colt, and doesn't know the meaning of correct manners."

"Thank God for that," asserted Gwithian.

"Of course I am irresponsible," pouted Marjorie. "How can I be otherwise? All my life you have settled everything for me. But you will let Mr. Trewithen teach me how to drive, won't you? I am sure he's as careful as if he were seventy years old, and the way he brought us home was just a dream. He's invited us to his house, too, and I do want to go. As you know, it's haunted, and I would love to see a ghost."

"Do be sensible, Marjorie," corrected the mother. "I hope you like Cromlech Cottage, Mr. Trewithen, and that you will be very happy there. It's a lovely district, but I am afraid you will find it rather lonely. I suppose you have found friends here?"

"I have made the acquaintance of old Susan Jory and several other cottagers," he replied; "and the Vicar called to see me this afternoon. Beyond them I know no one except the doctor."

"You know Mr. Borlase, then?"

"He called to see me the day after I came."

Was he mistaken or did he see something malignant flash from her eyes? If he did, it was only for a moment; but it was then that her face impressed him unfavourably. He noticed how thin her lips were,—noticed, too, something peculiar about the way her eyes were placed.

"Trewithen is an old Cornish name," she said; "are you Cornish? Do you know the county?"

"Not very well. I spent two years in the Camborne district studying mining engineering; but beyond that I know nothing. I have been in South Africa these last two years," he added.

Her face seemed to clear at this. "I hope you will enjoy your stay at the cottage," she said graciously. "Now, Marjorie, my dear, you must dress for dinner at once. You are late as it is."

"I shall hold you to your promise, Mr. Trewithen," cried the girl. "I shall not let mother rest until she has consented to my learning to drive. And you *will* invite me to your house if there is any chance of my seeing a ghost, won't you?"

"Run away, Marjorie; you ought to be ashamed of yourself. You really must forgive her, Mr. Trewithen."

"It's delightful to see anyone so frank and unaffected," replied Gwithian after she had gone. "Forgive me for saying so, Mrs. Pendragon, but you have a lovely house here; it reminds me of Hatfield Hall."

"Yes, I suppose it's a fine old place," the woman replied, "and is one of the oldest in the county. I'm told that Drake's House up near Stratton is nearly as old, while some say that Godolphin was built nearly at the same time. Are you interested in old houses?"

"I have a kind of passion for them," replied the young man. "I should never have taken Cromlech Cottage but for that."

"Then you know nothing about Pendragon?"

"Never knew there was such a parish until a few days ago."

"Anyhow, I hope we shall see something of you while you are in the neighbourhood," she smiled graciously. "Harold often feels very lonely, and your coming will be a godsend to him."

"She seems very desirous of being friendly," thought Gwithian as he drove back to his cottage. "She doesn't seem a bad sort either. Surely Borlase must have been mistaken; she doesn't seem the kind of woman who would be unjust."

A sense of loneliness possessed him as he entered Cromlech

Cottage. During the evening he constantly found himself thinking of the strange visitation which had come to him on the night of his arrival, and wondering what it all meant. It seemed to him, too, that strange influences were at work. He did not know why it should be so, but he was startled by every sound, and more than once he went to the door and looked at the places where he had seen his nocturnal visitors.

"I will go to bed," he reflected presently. "I expect I am not as strong as I thought I was, and I am a little overtired."

But he did not move from his chair. Somehow the thought of going to his bedroom alone was repugnant to him.

"That old fireplace and mantelpiece must have been there when the Earl of Pendragon lived here," he reflected. "Those great granite slabs must have been there for centuries. I suppose the old chap often used to sit here as I am sitting now; perhaps on this very spot."

A kind of lassitude possessed him and he knew that he was falling asleep. Well, why not? Cradock had gone to his room for the night and he might as well sleep there as in his bedroom. Then, before he realized it, sleep came upon him.

He was alone in the old Pendragon church.

Why it was he did not know, but he felt as though he had been drawn to the sacred edifice without will or purpose of his own. It was night-time and yet he could see plainly. The two lines of old granite pillars stood out in clear outline; the timbers which supported the roof were also visible. Looking westward he saw the bell-ropes, while nearer him, at the entrance door, stood the baptismal font. Through the leaded diamond-paned windows the dim light crept in.

"Why am I here?" he asked himself. "What am I doing in the old Pendragon church alone and at night-time?" But no answer came.

Instinctively he moved eastward; saw the low pulpit, shabby and worm-eaten, into which he imagined the Vicar went Sunday by Sunday to talk to his little flock. Presently he stood by the door of the Pendragon pew.

The church was very silent. Not a sound broke the stillness of the night save the sighing of the wind as it found its way through the leafy trees.

He could see no one, and yet he felt that presences were near. Who or what they were he could not tell; but something, something living, something that possessed personality, was by his side.

He was completely calm and self-possessed; no thought of fear entered his mind. It was very strange that he should be in this old building, especially at night-time; but there was no suggestion of terror, nothing that disturbed the serenity of his mind. Then, as it seemed to him, a presence near him began to take shape. It was but dimly visible; nevertheless it became clearer and clearer in outline.

The presence, or whatever it was, became more clearly outlined. First a finger, then a hand, then an arm, and presently the whole body.

It was a man he saw. An elderly man, though not old. He saw the face plainly, saw the whole figure. In a sense it was real, tangible; in another it was altogether unreal, intangible. But it was very plainly to be seen. A man who might have been nearly sixty years of age, wearing no beard, but a short, well-trimmed moustache which was slightly turning to grey. The face was kindly; the eyes pleasant yet with a look of unutterable yearning in them as though their possessor had great longings. He was dressed after the fashion of English gentlemen. A well-cut, dark tweed suit. On his head was a soft felt grey hat. On the little finger of the left hand was what looked like a very old ring in which was set a curiously carved stone.

The figure looked at him steadily and their eyes met.

"You have brought me here for a purpose," Gwithian thought. "What is that purpose? Who are you?"

The lips of the figure moved as though he were trying to speak, but was unable to express any words. Then the right hand moved and the forefinger pointed to the Pendragon vault.

"What does he want me to do?" he asked himself. "He looks as though he wants to tell me something. But what? I know nothing of the Pendragon vault. I am a stranger here."

While the figure pointed to the vault, it again looked at Gwithian and there was something beseeching in his eyes.

He found himself attempting to speak.

"What do you want?" he tried to say, but no words were uttered. It seemed to him as though a weight were placed upon his lips.

And still he watched. An expression, almost of agony, came on the figure's face. There was something beseeching, compelling in it; but no word could he hear, no sound passed its lips. Gwithian began to be afraid. Terror crept into his heart. There was something awful in the eyes of the presence near

him. He thought he heard distant cries of anguish. The light in the church became dimmer and dimmer. The old grey granite pillars which had been so clearly outlined at first were no longer to be seen. It seemed to him that evil presences surrounded him.

He found himself struggling, fighting as if for his own life, then he gave a cry.

He was awake. He was in his own room at Cromlech Cottage. The brightly burning lamp was standing on the table by his side, the book he had been trying to read was open before him.

He rose from his chair and moved rapidly around the room; he was trying to ask himself what had happened to him; to shake himself free from the forces which possessed him.

He was his own man again. His mind was normal, he was free from disturbing influences.

"By Jove, but it *was* vivid!" he laughed to himself. "Of course, I was dreaming; but I never had such a dream before. I remember the face, too. I could easily draw it!"

Acting upon impulse, he seized a square of clean paper; then, taking a soft pencil from the desk which stood near by, he began to sketch. The face of the man he had seen in his dream began to appear. He remembered it so clearly that he was able to produce it almost to perfection.

"There," he said to himself when he had finished, "that's it!" And he laughed as he looked at it. "If I were to send that to a popular magazine, and give the circumstances under which it was done, it would create quite a sensation. Anyhow, it was an experience, and now I will go to bed."

His dream, or whatever it was, had no evil effects upon him. He found himself humming a song while he was undressing, and on going to the window he noticed how bright was the light of the waning moon.

He got into bed and fell asleep almost instantly. No dreams disturbed him, no unpleasant happening came to him. When he awoke bright sunlight was shining in at the window.

When he went downstairs he found Cradock busily laying the breakfast table.

"Had a good night, Cradock?"

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir."

"Not disturbed by any ghosts?"

"No, sir."

"That ghost business was all nonsense, Cradock. You neither heard nor saw anything."

Cradock was silent; then, hearing a knock at the door, he left the room. When he returned it was to bring several letters.

"I am sorry for this," Gwithian said presently.

"Nothing the matter, I hope, sir?"

"No. But I have just had a letter from a man who wants me to meet him at Plymouth to-night. He says he is sailing for Australia and wants to see me before he goes."

"Excuse me, sir; but does that mean that you will be away from home for the night?"

"I am afraid it does."

"And I shall have to sleep in this house alone?"

Gwithian could not help laughing. In spite of his own experiences he felt so light-hearted that morning that nothing seemed worth troubling about.

"If you are afraid, Cradock, get the man who works in the garden to sleep here while I am away. It'll only be for one night."

"That man wouldn't sleep here if you were to give him a fortune, sir. But I dare say I shall manage."

That afternoon Gwithian caught the train for Plymouth, and instead of staying there only one night he remained two. When he returned it was just after midday.

"Anyone called while I have been away?" he asked.

"No, sir—not as you may say called."

"What do you mean by that?"

"After you have had lunch I should like to have a conversation with you, sir. Here are your letters, sir."

Gwithian attacked his lunch with vigour, after which he turned to his letters.

One of them was from Mrs. Pendragon of Pendragon Hall, asking him to dine there two nights later.

CHAPTER VII

CRADOCK'S STORY

GWITHIAN read Mrs. Pendragon's missive a second time. It was a friendly note, saying that she was not inviting him to a dinner party but to a family meal. Possibly, she informed him, the Vicar and his wife would be there as well. It expressed the kindest sentiments, and she told him that she joined very heartily with her son and daughter in hoping that he would be able to come.

Cradock was very attentive to his young master during the time he served the meal, but nothing more. Hitherto, taking

the liberty of an old family servant, he had entered into conversation with him; but to-day he was taciturn and gloomy.

"You said you wanted to speak to me, Cradock," remarked Gwithian after lunch. "Is anything wrong?"

"Yes, there is something wrong, sir. I must give notice, sir."

"So things happened while I have been away, eh?"

Cradock was silent.

"Come now, let's understand one another. You and I are old friends, Cradock; you have known me almost all my life, and you were in my father's house for twenty years."

"Yes, sir."

"And yet you talk about leaving me in the lurch?"

"I don't want you to be left in the lurch, sir. I would like to serve you always; but there are certain things which flesh and blood can't bear. It isn't that I want to leave *you*, sir. I will go anywhere in the world with you, sir. But—but—— Excuse me, but must you stay here? Not only has the place an evil name, but it's evil in *itself*, sir. I am sure it is."

Gwithian looked at Cradock more attentively. There was no doubt as to his being frightened. His face was as pale as paste, while the flesh hung flabbily on his cheeks. Evidently he believed what he said.

"Have you slept here alone?"

"Slept, sir! I have been in this accursed house alone. The first night was bad enough, sir, but that was nothing compared with the second night."

"Then you have been troubled on both nights?"

"Both nights, sir. Oh, it was simply terrible to be here in the house alone; *terrible*, sir!"

"Well, tell me exactly what took place."

"I went to bed about ten o'clock, sir, and remembering what you said, I was quite calm and collected. After all, I told myself, all his talk about spirits and apparitions was nonsense. Besides, why should anyone want to harm me? When I was a boy I used to go to Sunday School and my father and mother were religious people. They taught me to pray, sir, and although I am afraid I have forgotten about such matters for many years, I knelt down by my bedside and said my prayers. I called to mind that old hymn, sir, and I repeated it over and over again to myself."

"What hymn?" asked Gwithian.

"That 'ymn, sir, that 'as the lines:

> 'May no ill dreams disturb my rest,
> No powers of darkness me molest.'

"As you may say, sir, I was quite calm and in a good frame of mind. You will believe this, sir, when I tell you that I hadn't been in bed, sir, more than two minutes before I fell asleep. How long I had been asleep I don't know, but I woke with a start; then I heard——"

"What did you hear?"

"At first I thought it was in this room, sir; but it wasn't. It sounded under the room."

"What sounded under the room?"

"First it was a thumping noise, sir, like someone 'itting an empty box with an 'ammer."

"Like someone hitting an empty box with a hammer?" repeated Gwithian.

"That was like it was at first, sir. Then I 'eard a moan, an 'orrible moan. Come to that, sir, 'twas more like a groan, —like someone in awful pain, sir. I went to the 'ead of the stairs, sir, and looked down; but everything was in darkness."

"And did the sounds continue?"

"They did, sir."

"Did you go farther than the head of the stairs?"

"I did not, sir. I am only yuman, sir, and I was afraid. I felt as though I was forsaken of God and of man, sir, and I went back to my bedroom and locked the door behind me."

"Well, what happened then?"

"I waited while the rumbling noises continued. I daren't move."

"Rumbling noises?"

"Yes, sir, rumbling noises. It sounded like someone under the 'ouse 'ammering empty boxes."

Gwithian tried to think what this might mean. Certainly it was strange.

"Well, what happened then?"

"I heard a cry, sir. It sounded like someone calling, calling in a woman's voice."

"A woman's voice?"

"Yes, sir, a woman's voice. Yet it wasn't quite a call, sir, if you can understand."

"No, I can't understand. But you say you heard a woman's voice. Did you hear any words?"

"I thought I did, sir, or at least I thought I heard one word."

"What word?"

"It sounded like 'Roger,' sir. And after that I didn't feel so much afraid. There was something more yuman in it."

Gwithian was silent for a few minutes ; he was thinking deeply. "And then ?" he asked.

"I didn't hear anything more *under* the house, and thinking everything was all right, I plucked up courage and went into your bedroom."

"Why there ?"

"I hardly know, sir, except that it seemed to give me confidence like. Somehow I didn't feel so much alone in your room."

"Well, did anything further happen ?"

"I went to the window, sir, and looked out, and I saw something."

"What did you see ?"

"A figure, sir, a figure all in white."

"In white ?"

"All in white, sir. Oh, it was terrible."

"What kind of a figure ?"

"I can hardly tell you, I was too frightened. I think I lost my head, sir, for I called out, 'P'lice ! P'lice ! P'lice,' and then the figure faded out of my sight. That was all the first night, sir."

Gwithian, who had been sitting in his arm-chair while Cradock had been speaking, got up at this, and began to walk excitedly around the room. The man's narrative was somewhat reminiscent of his own experiences. He did not doubt that Cradock told him the truth. Even now he was trembling with fear, and conviction was in his every tone.

"I say, Cradock," he said, "are you sure you heard the word 'Roger' ?"

"I can't swear to it, sir ; but that was what it sounded like to me. It was repeated three times, sir : 'Roger, Roger, Roger.' Not said as I am saying it exactly, but a kind of a cry, as though the person who spoke wanted only one person to hear, if I make myself plain."

"Well, you say that was all that happened on the first night. What happened last night ? Did you hear any rumbling noises ?"

"No, sir." And then Cradock hesitated.

"What did you hear, then ?"

"I took a great liberty, sir. I daren't try to sleep in my own bedroom again. I simply daren't. I nearly went mad at the thought of it. You see, sir, I was in the house *alone, all alone* ! And pardon me, sir, but for love of you I would run away and never come to the accursed place again. But you

had sent me a wire last night, sir, saying you would be home to-day, and I felt I couldn't leave you. All the same, I daren't sleep in my own room."

"What did you do then?"

"I took a great liberty, sir. I took out the sheets from your bed and put them in my own. I said, 'I will sleep in Mr. Gwithian's bed.' I don't know why I did it, sir, except that it gave me a kind of confidence. Well, sir, I got into your bed, and if you will forgive me saying so, I was quite comfortable. I didn't go to sleep; I couldn't; but I felt better, and although God didn't answer my prayers on the previous night, I kept on saying:

'May no ill dreams disturb my rest,
No powers of darkness me molest.'

"How long I lay I don't know, but a goodish while. Then I heard an 'orrible cry, simply 'orrible, sir, and it was outside the 'ouse."

"Outside?"

"Yes, sir, outside, but close to. I don't know how I did it, for I was shaking like a man sick of the palsy, but I jumped out of bed and went to the window. As you know, sir, the moon is nearly full. It has only been waning a few nights, and as I looked out of the window I could see its light shining through the trees. But it wasn't *that*, sir."

"What do you mean?"

"I saw an 'orrible face, sir, simply *'orrible*! It wasn't the face of a man, *it was the face of a devil.* Then I saw the figure of a man beneath the face creeping up to the house, creeping up to the front door."

"What did you do then?"

"I didn't do anything, sir. I suppose I fainted, for when I came to myself I was lying on the floor close to the window."

"Well, and what happened then?"

"Nothing, sir, everything was as quiet as the grave. Not a sound was to be heard save the ticking of that old eight-day clock there."

"You heard it, did you?"

"Yes, sir, I heard it—everything was that quiet."

Gwithian reflected a few seconds. "Tell me, Cradock," he said, "when you saw that figure creeping towards the front door, do you remember crying out, or anything of that sort?"

"Come to think of it, sir, I did,—I gave an awful yell, so to speak. The thought flashed through my mind of what would

happen to me if that 'orrible thing got into the house. But I remember nothing of what happened afterwards."

"And of course, you don't know how long you were unconscious?"

"No, sir."

"And, have you heard or seen anything since?"

"Nothing, sir, and I pray God I never may again. Come to that, I don't mean to. I wouldn't spend another night in this house for all you could give me."

"Then you will leave me alone?"

"Don't put it that way, sir. But I can't! I simply *can't*! I will leave at once if you don't mind, sir. Everything is shipshape."

"Very well, if that is your state of mind, you must go. But I thought you had more pluck, Cradock. Anyhow, I am going to see it through."

"What, sir! Do you mean to say you are going to stay here *alone*?"

"I am going to see this thing through, Cradock. As I told you, I am going to get at the bottom of it."

"But there is no bottom!" gasped Cradock,—"no more than there is a bottom to hell!"

"Don't talk nonsense, man. What it means I don't know yet; but I am going to know. Perhaps I am on the wrong track, but in spite of everything I believe I see a light. Now, Cradock, listen. I will make a bargain with you. You don't believe I would deceive you, do you?"

"Not willingly, sir."

"Then I will promise you this. No harm shall come to you, no harm of any sort; mind that. For another thing, I will promise that I will not sleep out of the house for the next month, and if at the end of the month I cannot give an explanation, I will leave the cottage for ever. That's my side of the bargain. Yours must be that you stay on here and do as I tell you."

"But man cannot fight against the devil, sir."

"Isn't there a passage in the Bible that says you can? 'Resist the devil and he shall flee from you'?"

"I think there is, sir."

"Well, then, you needn't be afraid. Anyhow, is it a bargain?"

"I expect it is, sir. Come to think of it, I don't believe when the time actually came that I could go away and leave you here alone." And the tears trickled down Cradock's face.

"That's right; we must stand by each other."

"But, sir," cried Cradock, "you talk about seeing a light. Did you really mean it? Have you any explanation to give, sir?"

"I daren't tell you yet, Cradock. What I have in my mind may be all worth nothing; but, by George, I am going to get at the bottom of it! That'll do; you can get away to your work now."

When he had left the room Gwithian began to reflect on his story. There were two things upon which his mind fastened. One was the word "Roger," which Cradock thought he heard. Of course he might have been mistaken, but the name intrigued him, haunted him. Roger was the name of four generations of Pendragons. Roger was the name of the boy who, with his sister Karenza, had been driven from their home years before. Roger was the name of the man whose vault he had seen in the old Pendragon church, and who in his dream he had seen after that visit.

But why had Cradock heard it? Why should the ghostly figure of a woman have uttered it?

Then again Cradock had heard noises coming from underground. He said they sounded as though they came from under that very room. He did not believe there was anything supernatural about it, but if he was right, how had the sounds come?

Putting on his cap he went out into the garden, and into the little coppice behind, and examined all the ground carefully.

When Cradock rang the tea-bell his young master was nowhere to be seen, and when at length he appeared, he was very quiet, very thoughtful. After tea he went out again and did not appear until dinner-time. But he said nothing to the man as to where he had been or what he had been doing.

"Cradock," said Gwithian when he came to ask him whether he required anything more before going to bed, "I have been thinking a good deal about what you told me."

"Yes, sir."

"Have you made any acquaintances since you came?"

"The old man they call Gran'fer Crowle has called once or twice, sir; and, of course, Susan Jory comes every day."

"Have you told them anything about your experiences?"

"I have told them what happened the night after I came, sir: about that refectory table being moved."

"But nothing that took place while I was away in Plymouth?"

"Not a word, sir."

"That's right. Don't."

"Very good, sir."

The next day Doctor Borlase called to see him.

"You are still here, I see," the doctor greeted him. "You will soon beat Chirgwin's record!"

"He stayed a week, didn't he?" laughed Gwithian. "I think I shall beat that."

"Nothing to report?" queried the doctor curiously.

"Did you think there would be?"

"I have been wondering. I can't drive that story you told me out of my head. I have heard that you met the young Trounces and drove them up to the Hall," he added. "How did you like them?"

"I wasn't much impressed by the young fellow. I like the girl very much. Look here, Doctor, are you sure you didn't give me a jaundiced account of Mrs. Pendragon?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"She struck me as a very kind-hearted woman; one who could never be guilty of such a thing as you have in your mind."

"You met her, then?"

"Only for a minute," and he gave an account of his visit to the Hall. "I am dining there on Saturday," he added.

"Whew!" exclaimed the doctor. "You must have made an impression, my dear fellow. She is very chary about inviting strangers to the house. Or perhaps the girl was struck with you. Is that it?"

"I am not a woman's man," replied Gwithian. "All the same, I am looking forward to Saturday night."

CHAPTER VIII

THE PICTURE OF ROGER PENDRAGON

"I CAN conceive of nothing more beautiful than this," said Mrs. Moss, who, sitting by Gwithian's side at the dining table, was looking through the window over the broad expanse of park.

"I agree with you," assented Gwithian. "If the ancient Pendragons had searched the county all over they could have found nothing more perfect. It is to all intents and purposes an inland house. Yet just over the hill yonder is the Atlantic. I think I am right?" and he turned towards Mrs. Pendragon, at whose right hand he sat.

"You have evidently studied the geography of the district," remarked that lady. "And I think you are right. The situation of the house is well-nigh perfect."

"Do you know, I have great sympathy with Becky Sharp," went on Mrs. Moss. "She said she could be virtuous on ten thousand a year. I am sure I could be happy in such a place as this—with all that it means, of course," she added.

The Vicar looked uncomfortable. He was not sure that his wife's remark was in good taste, and as it had been said that he had married beneath him, he was anxious that his wife should neither say nor do anything to confirm the general impression.

"I don't fancy that money has much to do with happiness," he remarked sententiously.

"Nonsense, William," retorted his wife: "money has everything to do with happiness. It is all very well for you to quote your Saint Theresas who lived in poverty, and yet declared themselves happy; they didn't live in the twentieth century. I told the Archdeacon so the other day. He was admiring the Vicarage and saying what a beautiful house it was: but what is the good of a beautiful house when you haven't the means to keep it up? In fact," she added, launching on her favourite topic, "the Church is only a genteel form of pauperism. I told the Archdeacon so plainly. He was telling us about the decrease in the number of our clergy, and the difficulty in getting educat d young men to become candidates for Holy Orders, and I said to him, 'What wonder?' I said. 'How can you expect young men to be candidates for starvation?' It isn't as though there wasn't plenty of money in the country. There is. And yet curates have to live on salaries which mechanics would sniff at, while such people as my husband are worse off than farm labourers."

"Come, my dear," objected the Vicar, "it isn't as bad as that."

"It is, William, and you know it. Of course, in the old days when living was cheap it wasn't so bad; but since the war when the price of everything is doubled one ought to be a Hottentot. I am sure that, but for the allowance of my people, I shouldn't have a decent frock to my back. Now, I put it to you, Mrs. Pendragon: ought my husband to devote the Easter Offering, which has always been a gift to the Vicar, to a fund for the restoration of the church? Of course, I know that the church needs restoring. Every one does. It's falling rapidly to decay, and it's a shame, for it's one of the old historic churches of the county; but flesh and blood comes before granite pillars, that's what *I* say. Of course, I was told what it would be before I became a clergyman's wife, and my people did their

best to dissuade me. Still, if they hadn't made me a liberal allowance, where should I be?"

"Where you are now, and as happy as a queen," laughed the Vicar.

"Mrs. Moss introduces a very trite but very interesting subject," interposed Gwithian, who pitied the Vicar. "Does happiness depend upon wealth? For example, who are the happiest people in this county? Are they the people who live in big houses and have all that money can buy, or are they the working people? Does happiness depend upon circumstances?"

"No," replied the Vicar.

"Certainly," contradicted the Vicar's wife. "I maintain that the very fact of living in a house like this, with all that such a place means, *must* bring happiness. I know it isn't a fair question to ask Mrs. Pendragon," persisted that lady; "but tell us now, doesn't it?"

Gwithian involuntarily shot a quick glance at his hostess, and could not help being impressed by what he saw. A look of pain, and more than pain, swept over her features. Her thin lips became compressed, and her closely placed eyes expressed something far from pleasant. In spite of himself he could not help thinking of the story Doctor Borlase had told him.

But it was only for a moment. A second later the smile with which she had first greeted him came back to her lips, and her features were perfectly controlled.

"In a sense I think Mrs. Moss is right," she said; "all the same, I don't think she is altogether right. Wealth has as many cares as poverty has. Nature has a cruel way of giving with one hand and taking away with the other."

"Was it not Emerson who wrote an article on Compensation?" asked Gwithian. "Did he not say that Providence had so arranged matters for us, and so ordered things, that on the whole the poor were quite as happy as the rich? Doubtless, wealth might and did bring comfort; but happiness, he insisted, was another matter."

"And he was right!"

The words escaped Mrs. Pendragon's lips almost like a gasp, and were spoken with such intensity that Gwithian could not help again glancing at her. He felt sure that this was not a happy woman.

"Give me neither poverty nor riches," quoted the Vicar.

"Give me cash, and plenty of it," said Harold Trounce,

speaking for the first time. "If you were to ask me what was the most unpleasant thing in life, I should reply—'to be hard up.' I am beastly hard up now," he added whimsically.

"I should like to be hard up in the same way," replied Mrs. Moss. "Oh, I know what I am talking about. When I was at home there was never the slightest need to trouble about money, and I am sure I was happier then than I am now."

"That's not a very nice compliment to me, my dear," smiled the Vicar.

"You know what I mean. It's sordid, just awfully sordid to be always obliged to think and to scheme how you can get the common decencies of life."

"I don't think it is as sordid as to be vulgarly rich," rejoined Marjorie. "When I was at school, I knew a girl whose father was a profiteer; she had heaps and heaps of money to spend, and certainly she was the most unpopular girl in the school. Her money seemed to carry a kind of curse with it."

"I think you are right," said the Vicar, who was spoken of as a radical. "These profiteers made their money by robbing others, and all money robbed from others brings a curse."

Again Gwithian involuntarily glanced at his hostess's face, but his glance told him nothing. She was perfectly calm and self-possessed. Her features betrayed no emotion whatever.

"Of course, Borlase was wrong," Gwithian reflected. "That story had no foundation in fact. She could not be a party to robbing anyone."

But he was not sure. He caught himself thinking again, as he had often thought since the doctor's visit, of the boy and girl who were the natural inheritors of this fine old mansion. To say the least of it, it was strange that their names had never been mentioned in the will. Again he reflected on what Roger Pendragon, when on his death-bed, had whispered in the doctor's ear. "I have made a will, Borlase; Trefry drew it up, and I have left practically everything to Roger and Karenza. Of course, I have provided for my wife, but at her death everything goes to them." To say the least of it, it was all very strange, and try as he might he could not forget the pleading words of the children.

Where were they now, he wondered? Was young Roger killed in the war as the doctor had said? And had the girl Karenza married someone and gone to live in Scotland?

He glanced at Mrs. Pendragon again, and as he noted the look in her eyes he wondered. She was a handsome woman, and made a perfect hostess, but her thin lips might suggest cruelty.

Then he reflected on the doctor's story again. Of course, cases were common whereby undue influence had been brought upon testators, and wills had been made which were utterly unfair.

But he would think no more about it; he was there as the guest of the owner, and it would be wrong to entertain unjust thoughts.

"Would you like to see over the house, Mr. Trewithen?" asked Mrs. Pendragon, as, on leaving the dining-room, Gwithian held the door for her.

"I should love it," cried the young man. "It seems a regular store-house of art."

"Yes, my late husband's father was a collector," she replied, "and he got some very rare things together. Shall we say in ten minutes? You will have finished your cigarettes by then."

"And I am coming with you, mother," cried Marjorie, who stood near. "I want you to give your opinion on my Chinese vases, Mr. Trewithen. I am sure you are a judge of such things"; and she gave him a ravishing smile as she passed from the room.

An hour later Gwithian had made a tour of the house with Mrs. Pendragon as his guide. True to her word, Marjorie had accompanied them for part of the time, but had presently left them together. Mrs. Moss had refused to go; it would make her break the Tenth Commandment, she had declared.

When they were left alone, Mrs. Pendragon's manner toward him changed. She no longer talked freely about the house, its history and its contents; but became silent, and a look which Gwithian could not understand settled upon her face.

"Do you like Pendragon?" she asked suddenly.

"Very much," he replied.

"Of course, you know you are a subject for gossip?"

"I have been told so. But why should I be? Of course, I have gone to live in a house which is supposed to be haunted."

"It isn't that altogether. I could see that Mrs. Moss was longing to ask why you, a bachelor, should come to an out-of-the-way parish like this. Of course, there is hunting in the district, and golf a few miles away"; and then she looked at him questioningly.

"I can hardly explain why I came," Gwithian informed her. He thought she was anxious to know all about him before extending further hospitality. "I am a mining engineer by profession, and for the last two years I have been in Africa. I suppose some would say I was rather fortunate; anyhow, as there was no need for me to continue working, and as I saw

a very attractive advertisement of Cromlech Cottage, I was drawn toward it. You see," he added, "I hate city life, and I love country life. That's about all."

"And you had no special reason for coming to Pendragon?"

"Not the slightest; never knew there was such a place until a few weeks ago."

"And do you anticipate staying here long?"

"I have taken Cromlech Cottage for a year with an option of buying it. Possibly I may; I don't know."

"Harold and Marjorie are awfully glad you have come," she volunteered. "You see, there are very few young people of their own order near by, and they look upon you as a godsend. I hope you like Harold."

"He seems a fine, frank young fellow, and I hope I shall know him better."

"I hope you will," she assented. "He seems to have fallen in love with you——" She seemed to be about to say more, and then restrained herself.

"I think we have seen all now, Mr. Trewithen," she went on, "and I want you to hear Marjorie sing. Like all mothers, I suppose I am unduly vain about my children; but I really think she has a good voice."

"I shall be delighted to have the opportunity," he replied.

Mrs. Pendragon had not exaggerated when she told him that Marjorie had a fine voice: she had. It was not often he had heard an amateur sing so well. Moreover, she was very frank and natural about her accomplishment. She sang willingly, sang because she loved it, and before long Gwithian found himself watching the girl's face and listening to her voice with more than usual interest. More than once he asked himself why he had forgotten the stockbroker's daughter so easily. Not long before he had felt that her loss was something from which he would never recover, and now she had nearly passed out of his mind.

Marjorie Trounce was intelligent, too; she was more than intelligent: she was fascinating, and looked a fitting mistress for Pendragon Hall.

"Well, every good thing must have an end," remarked the Vicar presently, "and it's Sunday to-morrow, so I must be getting home. Yes, I saw the book you mentioned in the library the last time I was here," and he turned to Gwithian. "Shall I find it for him, Mrs. Pendragon?"

A second later Gwithian found himself in the library, accompanied by the Vicar and Harold. It was a fine room, containing

several thousand volumes. In fact, the walls were completely lined with bookcases, except the one at the end where the fireplace stood.

"By the way," said the Vicar, nodding to a picture which was hung over the mantelpiece; "that is the late Mr. Roger Pendragon."

He switched on an electric light, which had been so arranged that it fell directly on the portrait. A second later Gwithian felt that his head was reeling, that the whole room was rocking around him. It was well that the eyes of the other two men were also fixed on the painting, or they would have seen that on his face which would have set them wondering.

The face he saw on the wall was, feature by feature, the face of the man he had seen in his dream (or whatever it might be) on the night after he had visited the old church and stood by the Pendragon vault.

But he did not speak: he could not. He was too stunned, too bewildered. His senses seemed to be leaving him, everything in the room was unreal, unnatural. He felt afraid too; there was something awesome, fearful, in the thought that the features of the man he had seen in his vision were outlined to the minutest detail in the picture on the wall.

"I must be taking leave of my senses," he said to himself. "This is madness, a wild phantasmagoria."

And yet it stood there plain and distinct. Every feature was lit up by the electric arrangement, while close by his side stood the Vicar and Harold Trounce.

"It's supposed to be a fine painting," said the Vicar; "one of Roberto's finest. But I can't speak authoritatively, as I never saw the gentleman."

"Yes," assented Harold, "it's a fine portrait. It was painted about two years before my stepfather died. I was only fourteen at the time, but I remember him well. It's exactly like him."

Gwithian drew nearer the picture, as if to inspect it more closely. His head whirled with excitement, but he made no remark; he felt incapable of speech. His thoughts were a whirlpool. He had never seen Roger Pendragon, had not the slightest conception of the kind of man he was, and yet the picture before him might have been painted from what he had seen standing by the Pendragon vault.

"You seem greatly interested, Mr. Trewithen," said the Vicar; "you didn't know him, did you? But of course you didn't. How could you?"

He had so far regained his self-control by this time that he

was able to think more coherently. "No, I never knew him,' he replied, and his voice sounded to him like something echoing far away. "But I *am* interested." Then he gave a little gasp, for he caught sight of the ring, the curiously shaped ring, which he had seen in his vision and which was reproduced in the painting.

"You will come again soon, won't you?" asked Marjorie as she bade him good night. "It's been just lovely to have you here."

"You are awfully kind," replied Gwithian.

"And you must invite me to Cromlech Cottage. You promised, you know. Didn't he, Harold? If you don't ask me I shall come without an invitation."

"You mustn't pay any attention to this silly child," remarked Mrs. Pendragon. "She doesn't say much for my upbringing, does she?"

"Now, Mr. Trewithen, be careful not to give me away," laughed the girl. "Don't you think I was brought up perfectly?"

"Exactly as you ought to have been," he replied. "Of course you must come to see me; and I hope Mrs. Pendragon will come too."

"Then fix the date soon. I am just dying to see your lovely cottage. And don't forget about the driving lessons."

The girl's words rang in his ears as he steered the car down the drive; nevertheless, he was silent and thoughtful. Mr. and Mrs. Moss, whom he was taking back to the Rectory, talked freely to him, but he answered them only in monosyllables. His mind was too full of what he had seen that night to allow him to enter into conversation.

From the Vicarage gates, where he dropped the Vicar and his wife, he could see the old church tower plainly, and when they were out of sight he drew up at the churchyard gates and looked intently at the ancient edifice.

It was now nearly midnight, and it was one of those still, silent nights when the silence seems to make a noise. Getting out of the car and finding the gates open, he wandered into the churchyard. Why he did this he could scarcely tell; but he was possessed with strange longings. All around the old church the little village nestled, while the leafy trees hid many of the cottages. Nothing happened to him. Neither sight nor sound of anything out of the ordinary greeted him. The old church tower stood out plainly in the light of the waning moon which was just rising. The sight made him feel the wonder and the mystery of life. He realized how little materialism ex-

plained its wondrous inwardness. But he experienced nothing of what he had felt a few nights before. Roger Pendragon was only a name to him ; his experiences had little or no meaning.

A minute later he was on his way back to Cromlech Cottage. Passing the Pendragon Hall gates he remembered the smile with which Marjorie Trounce parted from him ; remembered the pressure of the girl's hand. But it was only a passing thought. The love of a woman was not for him ; that was a thing of the past, and never to be repeated.

After putting up his car he entered his cottage, and found the lamp brightly burning on the table.

" A pleasant evening, sir ? " queried Cradock, who came to him.

" Very," replied Gwithian.

" Do you require anything, sir ? "

" Nothing, thank you. Everything's all right, I suppose ? "

" Yes, sir. Good night, sir."

No sooner did he hear Cradock climb the stairs, and close his bedroom door behind him, than, going to a cupboard, he took out the sketch he had made of the face he had seen in his dream. The likeness between the sketch, and the portrait hanging on the Pendragon library wall, was startling. Of course, his own work was crude and rough ; but there was no mistaking the fact that the face on the paper before him was the face portrayed by the great Italian artist.

He had never seen Roger Pendragon in his life. Until a few days before he had never known that such a person had existed. And yet this had happened to him.

Why ?

In a way he had never experienced before, a consciousness of the spiritual came to him. He had not been what could be called a religious man, he had troubled nothing about spiritual things. He had argued that if there was a God, He was unknown and unknowable. Possibly, probably, there was an Eternal Force at the back of all things which accounted for all that was. But that force was too great, too mysterious, for the mind of man to grasp. Whether man had a spiritual nature or not he was not sure. What men called the spiritual nature might be only the working of the brain. Whether there was a life other than this he didn't know ; he did not trouble. This world was sufficient for him.

But now there was a change. He felt a kind of consciousness of God. It seemed to him, too, that God was a Person and that He was interested in him. He had a feeling that God was

near him, that He had given him his life for a purpose. This had not come to him by any process of reasoning, but by a kind of intuition. And it made life greater, more wonderful. It explained certain passages in the New Testament; certain passages uttered by the Carpenter of Nazareth which he had never understood before:

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Heavenly Father. Are ye not of more value than many sparrows?"

The meaning of the words came to him like a revelation. God sent Jesus Christ into the world to reveal His own nature; to reveal the wonder of life.

If that were so, life was not smaller but greater through the revelation. What was called death was not death at all. . . .

Thus, Roger Pendragon, whose body had been placed in the Pendragon vault, was not dead. Might there not be some objective reality in the strange dream which had come to him, and was not that why, he, Gwithian Trewithen, had seen his face so plainly?

Of course, it was all a mystery; but then, was not life itself a mystery? Wasn't everything worth thinking about mysterious?

He started suddenly. Near him, almost underneath his feet, he heard curious noises. He remembered what Cradock had told him about hearing something like the sound of knocking on an empty box with a hammer.

Instantly Gwithian ceased his semi-philosophic musing and became a man of action. Whatever might be the meaning of the picture which lay before him this which he heard was altogether material. He rushed across the room and moved the heavy refectory table away from the wall. A minute later he was under the stairway, and saw the top of some stone steps which led underneath the house. He crept down the steps, and no sooner did he reach the bottom than he heard a hideous cry. A few seconds later he found himself in a life-and-death struggle with an unseen antagonist.

CHAPTER IX

GWITHIAN AND KARENZA

GWITHIAN, after much searching, had, on his return from Plymouth, found the stone steps to which reference has been made. He had made other discoveries, too; discoveries explaining many things which had hitherto been mysterious.

This was why, directly he heard the noises beneath the room, he had made his way to the stone stairway mentioned at the close of the last chapter.

The attack made upon Gwithian was sudden; so sudden that at first he was almost mastered and borne to the ground. Who or what his antagonist was he could not tell. He had been so excited by the noises, that he had hurried thither without taking due precautions.

There was something inhuman in the attack. The creature uttered all kinds of unearthly sounds, and snarled as a savage animal might snarl when trying to overcome its prey.

But Gwithian was a strong man. Although weakened by his experiences in South Africa, and not having yet recovered his full strength, he was still powerful beyond the ordinary. Muscles once made are never lost, and in his youth he had been both a boxer and an athlete. Besides, he had regained strength rapidly while he had been in Cornwall; every day had meant new health to him.

There was something fearsome about the fight. The thing with which he struggled was so unlike anything he had known before; added to which the circumstances were so strange, that something like terror gripped him. There seemed no method in the attack; no purpose, save to inflict on him all the injury possible.

At length he found his antagonist weakening. Panting breath was followed by hoarse cries; then it seemed to him as if the thing were appealing to him for mercy.

But he had to be careful. That with which he was fighting was so strange that he felt he must be on the look out for any cunning act. That was why he showed no mercy as grimly and with set purpose he crushed the thing he fought.

At length it was inert, almost silent, and would have appeared to be dead, but for the sound of gasping breaths. A few seconds later he was carrying it up the stone stairs; carrying it with infinite pain and difficulty. It lay like a huge dead weight in his arms, and being well-nigh exhausted himself, the task was almost beyond his strength.

At length, however, he reached the top of the stairs and then squeezed both himself and his burden through the aperture into the room. Then the light of the lamp enabled him to see what he had been fighting with.

At first it seemed scarcely human. Its clothes were torn and dishevelled. Lying there, an inert mass on the floor, it appeared

so misshapen as to be unlike anything he had seen before. But that was only for a minute. He saw that the thing was a man —a young man. Placing the lamp in a position where he could better see him, he regarded him intently, watching him warily for fear of any trick that might be played. But he need not have feared, the creature was too exhausted to be capable of harm.

Presently he opened his eyes and appeared to be almost blinded by the light of the lamp. Then Gwithian thought he saw a return of intelligence, and with intelligence, fear.

"You won't let them take me!" the poor thing gasped. "You won't let them lock me up, will you? I am not mad!—really I am not mad!"

"No harm shall come to you," replied Gwithian. "But who are you? What do you want?"

"I am not going to tell!—No, I am not going to tell!" And then an idiot-like grin passed over his features.

Gwithian saw that his face was drawn and contorted. He saw streaks of blood not only on his cheeks but on his hands. It was a horrible-looking face; as pale as the face of a corpse; misshapen and contorted; it did not seem like a human face at all.

"Tell me who you are," Gwithian repeated, "and what you are doing here."

"I won't," was the reply. "You will tell on me, and then I shall be locked up."

"Why should you be locked up? What have you done?"

"I won't tell you!—I can't—my—head is swimming."

Gwithian had recovered his own strength by this time, and was again able to think coherently. He had seen this young man before. This was the face he had seen on the night of his coming.

"The poor creature's fainting," he said to himself. "He looks as though he's dying from starvation."

He rushed to a cupboard and poured out some stimulant, which he placed to the man's lips.

"There, drink that," he said; "it will do you good."

He watched while life struggled back to the eyes, saw the colour come back into the bloodless cheeks. Then he rushed into the kitchen and found some eatables. When he returned the poor thing was sitting up and looking around the room. Gwithian lifted him into a chair and placed food before him.

"You won't tell anybody!" he gasped, and the words seemed to be enunciated with difficulty. "You won't let them lock me up, will you? I am not mad!—no! I—am not mad!"

"Never mind that now," replied Gwithian; "eat this, and you will feel better."

He grabbed at the food like a starving animal, and ate voraciously, looking suspiciously around the room all the time as though frenzied with fear.

Gwithian watched him meanwhile, and noticed things which had hitherto escaped him. One side of his face was smaller than the other. It looked as though at some time it must have been burnt away. One eye, too, was misplaced, and thus gave the whole face a sinister appearance.

"Feeling better now?"

The man nodded.

"Now then, tell me who you are, and why you are here."

He shook his head. "If I did, you would tell the police—get me locked up!"

"I shall have to if you don't. You are not fit to be at large."

"Oh, you wouldn't!—you wouldn't!" he gasped. "I will promise to go away and never come again. You wouldn't break her heart!—— Yes, you would!—— You would break her heart! I know I have done wrong; but then, how could I help myself? Night after night, night after night, it came to me, 'Go to Cromlech Cottage,' it said. 'Go to Cromlech Cottage! The secret is there, the secret is there!'"

"What came to you?" asked Gwithian. "What said, 'Go to Cromlech Cottage'?"

"I don't know. How can I tell?"

"But you must know."

The poor thing looked at Gwithian questioningly. It might seem as though he were trying to read his heart, to understand his innermost thoughts.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"For the present I am the owner of this place," replied Gwithian.

"But why did you come here?"

"Surely that's my business?"

"Have you found It?"

"Found what?"

"Found It. There is only one thing to me now. I don't care about myself! Let them do what they like with me! It's for her I am seeking. Let her have her rights, and then what does it matter about me? I am supposed to be dead.—— But don't tell anyone, will you? Promise you won't? If they were to find me they would lock me up, and as I told you,

that would break her heart." He panted out the words, looking beseechingly at Gwithian all the time.

"Break whose heart?"

"Why, Karenza's! Don't you understand? Karenza is the only one in the world who cares for me. Karenza loves me, and she would break her heart if I were locked up."

Gwithian's mind was working rapidly. He was connecting one bit of information with another; trying to make a whole out of scattered scraps of knowledge. Possibilities of which he never before dreamt of were appearing to him.

"You have been here before," said Gwithian at length. "You have visited this house many times?"

"How could I help it? The secret is here, the secret which will give Karenza her rights."

"Have you been to Pendragon Hall? Do you know it?"

No sooner had the name passed his lips than Gwithian felt sorry he had uttered it. The eyes which had become more normal, the face which had become almost calm, became those of a maniac again.

"Know Pendragon Hall!" he said with a hoarse cry. "Know Pendragon Hall!—why—why—why—I was——"

Then he mastered himself again.

"No, I am not going to tell you. I mustn't. Karenza said I mustn't tell anyone. And I won't."

He became calmer again. His face settled into something like repose.

"Promise you won't tell!" he pleaded. "Do promise that. You have a kind face—*do* promise that!"

"I will promise to tell nothing that shall harm you," Gwithian said kindly.

"Will you swear it?" asked the poor creature. "Will you take your oath on the Bible? Have you got a Bible here? If you will swear it on a Bible I can perhaps believe. You see, I must do what I am allowed to live for. I should die if it wasn't for that. But we are twins—Karenza and I—and we love each other. When we were children we were all the world to each other. Karenza is a part of me, and I am a part of her. That's why I mustn't be locked up. That's why I must never cease searching until I find IT."

"What is IT?"

"What will give Karenza what is hers. When that's done it doesn't matter about me. I will die willingly then."

Again Gwithian looked at him intently. The food he had

eaten and the confidence which had come to him made him appear more natural. He saw that, in spite of his distorted features, he had an air of refinement. His voice was pleasant, too, when he spoke naturally. He was thin almost to emaciation, but if he were only well dressed and cared for he would be handsome. But clothed in rags and unkempt as he was, he looked repulsive.

"You will let me go now, won't you?" he pleaded, noting Gwithian's gaze. "I have not done any harm. I have not stolen anything! I swear I haven't. And you promised not to harm me. You will let me go, won't you?"

"Not yet," replied Gwithian. "I must think first."

"Think what?"

"Think what I can best do to help you."

"Why should you help me? I am nothing to you."

He seemed quite intelligent now and asked his questions quickly and reasonably.

"You are Roger Pendragon," said Gwithian.

"No, I am not! No, I am not! Don't tell anyone! You promised not to tell anyone. How did you know?"

"You are Roger Pendragon," repeated Gwithian. "You were born at Pendragon Hall, you and your sister Karenza."

"But you must not tell! Swear you will not tell!" He spoke frantically; he had become like a madman again.

"No harm shall come to you through me," replied Gwithian quietly. "Only you must trust me."

"Trust you! What do you mean by that?"

"Tell me everything you know. Tell me where you live, why you have come here."

The poor creature laughed wildly. "No, I will not tell you that!" he said. "Oh!"—and there was self-pity in his voice —"why is my poor head so bewildered? Why can't I think? Why can't I think? I have forgotten now why I did come here."

"Wasn't it to find something?" asked Gwithian.

"Yes, I remember now, it was to find—it was to find—IT."

"What's IT?"

"I daren't tell you that. It might mean——"

"But why should you come here? This is not Pendragon Hall."

"No, no, it's not Pendragon Hall. But the voice, yes, the voice kept on saying, 'Go to Cromlech Cottage! Go to Cromlech Cottage!' I frightened one man away from here. First the servants went, then he went! Then for a time I came when I wanted. But I could find nothing. It felt empty, empty,

empty! So I stopped coming. Then a little while ago—not so very long—the voice came to me again, 'Go to Cromlech Cottage!' When I came, I found people here again, and I hoped I should frighten them away; but I didn't. You have not been frightened, have you?"

"No," replied Gwithian, "I have not been frightened."

"Now you will let me go, won't you? It will soon be daylight—and I mustn't ever be seen! Karenza told me never to be seen."

"Where will you go?" asked the young man.

"That's telling!" And he laughed a madman's laugh. "But I must go. What's that?" and a look of terror came into his eyes.

Gwithian also was startled. There was a sound of someone tapping at the window; not loudly, but he heard it plainly.

"It's Karenza!" he whispered. "She found out that I had left, and she came after me. That's just like Karenza."

The tapping at the window was repeated, and Gwithian rose from his chair and made his way toward the door.

"No, no!—you mustn't go!" and Gwithian found his arm gripped as if by a vice. "By God! if you frighten Karenza, or do anything to harm her, I will murder you! Do you hear? *I'll murder you!*"

"I am not going to frighten her. I only want to help her."

"Swear it! swear it!"

"I tell you plainly I only want to help you both. Go back and sit down."

He obeyed like a dog, all the time watching the other with mad eyes.

Gwithian went to the door, opened it, and went into the porch. There, standing by the side of the window where he had heard the knocking, stood the form of a woman.

"Miss Karenza," he said, going close to her, "Miss Karenza Pendragon, your brother is inside. Come in, will you?"

The girl looked at him with frightened, questioning eyes; she seemed afraid to speak or move.

"No harm shall happen to him, Miss Karenza," he assured her; "he has been ill, but he is better now. Come in, will you?"

He heard the girl sob, but she silently followed him and presently entered the room.

No sooner did he see her than the poor mad boy—for he looked only a boy—rushed toward her with a glad cry.

"Karenza!" he crooned, "Karenza! my Karenza!"

He caught her by the hand and kissed it eagerly, uttering incoherent cries all the time.

"Roger," said the girl, "how could you? Why are you here? I told you you mustn't come—and you promised me."

"Forgive me, Karenza!—I didn't mean to come; but I couldn't help it. The voice kept coming to me, I could hear it in the wind, hear it in the rushing river, 'Go to Cromlech Cottage! Go to Cromlech Cottage!' So I came. I thought I was safe, too. I thought no one knew the secret of the passage but you and me. But this man was clever; he found out; and—he was stronger than I."

"But I told you the voice meant nothing; that it was only your imagination."

"Ah, you don't know, Karenza!—even you don't know. It became so insistent, and so loud, that I dared not disobey. That's why I came—and, Karenza, he's been kind to me—he promised not to tell. At first we fought—for I was afraid and I meant to kill him; but he mastered me, and I thought I was done for."

The girl's eyes, which were turned toward the mad boy in infinite tenderness, now swept to Gwithian.

"You've hurt him!" she cried savagely. "You——"

"No, no!" the boy interrupted, "he never struck me once, not once. He only mastered me—held my hands—then he brought me up here and gave me food and drink—he's very kind, Karenza—he's promised not to tell. I think he would have let me go if he hadn't heard you. I was hoping to get back without your knowing. How did you find out?"

All the time he was speaking he was looking at the girl as a dog might look at its master. There was something pathetic in his trust in, and his love for, her.

"I am not afraid now, Karenza," he went on. "The man is kind, and he has promised not to tell. Besides, you are here, and I am afraid of nothing when you are near me. Speak to me, Karenza, and tell me you are not angry. I only did it for you. It was all for you, Karenza—and I love you very dearly."

He kept on kissing her hand as he spoke, and crooning just as a mother croons over her baby.

During all this time Gwithian kept looking at the girl, trying to understand. Looking at his watch he saw that it was now nearly three in the morning, and he wondered where this strange couple lived. The girl had taken little or no notice of him; all her attention had been devoted to her brother. He saw

that, more than once, her lips quivered and tears came into her eyes as she looked at him; and he realized something of the feeling in her heart. She was the girl whom he had seen on the night of his coming, and she seemed like some guardian angel, who, with infinite pity, watched over the creature she was caring for.

She looked very young. He gathered from what he had heard from Doctor Borlase that she must be quite twenty-four years of age, but she looked younger. Indeed, she appeared little more than a child as she stood before him. And yet not altogether so; those sad, patient eyes proclaimed more than a girl's love. There was something of the mother devotion in them.

She was very pale; so pale that her face seemed almost death-like. But for that she would have been beautiful. Every feature was well-nigh perfect, and her large dark eyes shone with a wonderful light. She had glorious hair, too; great masses of it, that glistened in the lamplight.

After the youth had ceased speaking, there was a long silence, during which the girl seemed to be thinking deeply. Then she turned to Gwithian.

"Thank you for being kind to my brother," she said. "He was badly wounded in the war; so badly that he was thought to be dead. Indeed, he was reported to be dead, and—and—but you see he is here now. Thank you very much for being kind to him. You will continue to be kind, won't you?"

"How can I continue to be kind?" asked Gwithian.

"By saying nothing about his being here. He is really harmless; he means nothing wrong, so you will do no harm to him by being silent. Will you?"

"I will promise nothing until you have had some refreshment," replied Gwithian. "You are tired—almost exhausted. I will fetch you something."

"No, no," she pleaded, "I need nothing. I only want to take my brother away, and if I can I will try to keep better watch over him."

"But I can't allow you to go yet; there, you must sit down," and he placed a chair near her. "No harm shall happen to you, and I will bring something immediately."

The girl allowed herself to drop into the chair as he spoke. Evidently she was very weary; almost faint. A minute later she was partaking of the refreshment he brought to her.

"You are very kind," she repeated, "and I am grateful to you; but are you sure no one knows that he is here?"

"We are here alone," he replied. "There is no one in the house but ourselves, and my man, and I expect he is asleep."

"Oh, but does he know? I had forgotten your servant."

"I am sure he would be here had he been awake; but I will see."

He went to Cradock's bedroom door and listened, returning immediately afterwards.

"There is no doubt about it," he smiled. "Cradock is sound asleep, and knows nothing."

"Oh, I don't know how to thank you," she persisted. "But there is no need for us to stay any longer. We will go at once."

"I think you had better remain a little longer, anyhow," replied Gwithian, nodding toward the youth. "You see, your brother is fast asleep. I do not think it will be wise for him to go yet. Let him stay where he is and rest. No harm shall happen to him, I promise you, neither shall harm happen to you."

He followed the girl's gaze as he spoke. She, as well as he, had realized that the poor creature, worn out by excitement and fatigue, had fallen asleep in the arm-chair where Gwithian had placed him.

"I want to help you," he went on.

"Why do you want to help us?"

"Because I have heard something of your story."

"What story? What do you know about us?" And she looked at him suspiciously.

"I know that you are Karenza Pendragon," he said, "and that he"—nodding to the young man—"is Roger Pendragon. Doctor Borlase told me all about you."

"Doctor Borlase! Do you know Doctor Borlase?"

"He has been here twice. He told me about your late father, told me about the death, and—the Will."

"Did Doctor Borlase tell you about the Will?"

"Yes. I was greatly interested and—who knows?—perhaps I might help you."

"How can you help me?" And again she looked at him suspiciously.

"I don't know; perhaps not at all; perhaps a great deal."

"No one can help us," said the girl hopelessly. "Everything is beyond help. And yet, I *can't* believe—I simply *can't* believe that Dad would——" She stopped suddenly.

"Would what?" asked Gwithian.

For answer the girl fastened her large dark eyes upon him and looked as though she would read his soul. For nearly a minute she sat gazing at him without speaking a word. Every

emotion seemed to be expressed in her eyes. Doubt, fear, despair, suspicion, hope, faith, trust. At length she gave a sigh as if of relief, then she said:

"I believe you are a good man. Yes, I will trust you."

"Thank you," replied Gwithian, "your trust shall not be betrayed." And then involuntarily both looked again at the youth who lay sleeping in the chair.

CHAPTER X

KARENZA'S STORY

"WHAT do you know about us?" she asked suddenly.

"All that Doctor Borlase could tell me."

"Yes, but what did he tell you?"

Gwithian repeated as nearly as he could the doctor's story.

"Then he believes Roger to be dead?" she said, when he had finished.

"Yes, he told me that he had written to the War Office, and that the report of his death had been confirmed."

"Were you in the Army during the war?" she asked.

"Yes. I am a mining engineer, and I was in the Royal Engineers when the war came to an end."

"Where were you?"

"At that time I was in Bapaume."

"Ah!" she sighed and lapsed into silence again.

"Yes," repeated Gwithian, "I was in Bapaume when the war ended. Where was your brother?"

"And the doctor told you he was dead?" she queried, not taking any notice of his question.

"Yes, he told me he was dead, and that you were married, that you were living in Scotland."

He glanced at her left hand as he spoke, looking for a wedding-ring. But there was none there. He saw, however, that her hands were hard and coarsened by labour.

"And he believed that I was married while——?"

"He did not seem clear about it," replied Gwithian; "he simply said that he had heard so."

"Your name is Trewithen, isn't it? I think I heard so."

"Yes, Trewithen—Gwithian Trewithen."

"Gwithian?" she repeated. "Why, St. Gwithian is the patron saint of Pendragon parish. The feast of St. Gwithian is held on the first Sunday of September. There used to be revels on the village green on that Sunday."

"Yes," he replied, "St. Gwithian is an old Cornish saint. There are three parishes in the county who have him for their patron saint. One I remember is near Hayle, another in the north. I didn't know, however, that he was the patron saint of Pendragon parish."

"No? The parish church has always been called Pendragon Church. St. Gwithian has been forgotten. But I am glad you are called Gwithian."

"Why?"

"I don't know, only it gives me more confidence. You see, St. Gwithian was a good man, and it was said of him that he lived only to help. It's only a coincidence, but I am glad."

"I want to help you, anyhow," replied Gwithian. Again the girl looked at him steadily for perhaps thirty seconds. Then her lips began to quiver again, while her eyes filled with tears.

"It seems so strange," she said piteously, "that I am looking to you for help. And I am sure there is a crime behind it all—a hideous crime. But what can I do?"

"Perhaps I can help you," he said again.

"How can you help me? How can anyone help me? It's not for myself that I care—it's for him!" And she looked toward the youth who continued sleeping peacefully in the chair.

"Think, Mr. Trewithin; he is my father's only son! He is Roger Pendragon, born at Pendragon Hall, and the rightful heir to everything! Yet look at him, penniless, helpless, mad, and no one to care for him, but me. But I will see justice done to him! I will!" And her eyes flashed with a new light.

"Perhaps if you would tell me about yourself——"

"Yes, I will," she interrupted him. "I had made up my mind to do that. Not that it will do any good; but perhaps it will ease the ache of my heart. Perhaps, too—— Oh, I have felt sometimes that I shall go mad—just as he is mad! But you don't believe it, do you, Mr. Trewithen? Say you don't."

"Believe what?" he asked.

"Believe that my father forgot. Believe that he intentionally left us homeless, friendless, penniless. Why, he couldn't do it! Yes, I know—he married that woman, and he was afraid of her. I know that she's in possession of everything; she and her son and her daughter; but he told us three months before he died that he had left everything to us. And my father was an honourable man, as true as the sun is true. And could he forget us? *Never*! NEVER! NEVER!" And there was increasing intensity in her voice as she repeated the word.

"That's what Doctor Borlase said," Gwithian volunteered.

"Repeat what Doctor Borlase said again!" she begged; "it gives me confidence to hear it."

Gwithian obeyed her. He told her the story of the return from the funeral; of the will which Mr. Trefry had produced, of the astonishment felt when neither Roger's nor Karenza's names were mentioned; of Mr. Trefry's bewilderment, and all that Mrs. Pendragon had said.

"You see!" she gasped; "even Mr. Trefry, who made the will, remembered something different! And Doctor Borlase protested that there must be another will! Every one was astonished, except that woman. You can see what it means, can't you?"

"I can see that it was terrible for you," replied Gwithian.

"It wasn't the money that I cared for; it wasn't so much our being heirs of our father," she asseverated fiercely; "it was the fact that he had forgotten us—had never even mentioned our names. Why, we might not have existed at all! That was the terrible thing! And it wasn't true—it was false as hell is false! Father loved us, loved us both; he told us so again and again, and the last time he saw us he asked forgiveness for marrying her. I think he knew he was going to die, because he told us he married her for our sakes. That she had persuaded him that we wanted a mother, and that she must be that mother. He told me that he felt helpless at the thought of having to bring us up, and that that woman persuaded him to marry her. Oh, I nearly lose my senses when I think of it! I was but a little girl at the time, but I remember it. I remember how she used to hate us; how she made our lives a hell, and how through the years she kept on nagging and nagging at father, trying to persuade him to send us away. Yes, I know he must have been weak; but nothing can ever persuade me that he ceased to love us, and that he intentionally neglected us. No, no; he told us the truth, and Doctor Borlase is right. There is another will somewhere; the *real* will! You believe that, don't you?"

She had risen to her feet by this time and her eyes flashed with a new passion. She was no longer the quiet patient girl who looked with infinite pity and compassion upon her afflicted brother; but another Portia who stood glorious in her demand for justice, and her determination to obtain it.

"Have you found out anything?"

She shook her head. "Nothing. Both Roger and I were stunned, paralysed by what we heard that day."

"Have you done nothing?"

"Done nothing! What could we do? But I will never give up; I never will! The truth is somewhere waiting to be brought to light, and while I am alive I will search for it. Look at him"—and she again nodded toward her brother. "Think of him, helpless, ill-clad, ill-fed, dependent on the little I can do, while those usurpers are in the place he ought to be! I wonder I have not gone mad."

"Doctor Borlase told me that he had never seen you since the day of the funeral," said Gwithian. "What did you do?"

"Just think of it"—and again the girl's eyes filled with tears. "That woman offered us—Roger and me!—hospitality for the night in my father's house!—In Roger's house, and mine! Offered us *hospitality*! And then she told us that doubtless we would want to go back to school, and that she would advance the money whereby we could finish our education. Think of it! But you can't realize what we felt."

"I think I can," replied Gwithian.

"We wouldn't stay. After we knew all Mr. Trefry could tell us, we left."

"Where did you go?" asked Gwithian.

"We went away to a little town a few miles from where I was educated. We had a few pounds between us, money which father had given us on his last visit. There was a paper factory in the town and we got work in that factory. Roger was paid eighteen shillings a week, and I had fourteen. However, we lived on it. You see, we managed to get cheap lodgings and we were very careful."

"That was very brave of you."

"No, it wasn't brave at all. Do you think we could live on that woman's bounty? Both of us said we would die first. Besides, we had our purpose to fulfil."

"What purpose?"

"Need you ask that? After my father's funeral Roger and I made up our minds that we would never rest until the wrong was righted. For we were sure, just as we are sure now, that that woman had frustrated our father's purposes, and had robbed us. But meanwhile we had to do something; we had to live. And we had to think how to accomplish what we had in our hearts. So you see there was nothing brave about it at all."

"And how long did you stay in the paper factory?"

"Nearly two years."

"And did you visit your old home during that time?"

"No. I don't think we had any reason for it, but both of us believed that it would be better that that woman should not know where we were. If she thought we were trying to find out the truth, she would take steps to circumvent us. Besides, the thought of coming to our old home and knowing that we had no right to be there, was hateful."

"Then during those two years you did nothing?"

"What could we do? Had Lawyer Trefry been alive we could have gone to him; but as you know, he died on the very night of father's funeral. Of course, everything was against us, and whichever way we turned, we were met by impossibilities. Then the war broke out," and she shuddered as she uttered the words.

She was silent for some time and seemed unable to speak.

"Well, what then?" asked Gwithian.

"Need you ask? Of course, Roger was only a little over seventeen and according to the law at that time he was too young to join the army. But of course he joined; no gentleman could do anything else. And Roger was a gentleman;—he was a Pendragon."

Her eyes flashed as she spoke, and there was pride in her voice.

"He joined up as a private," she went on, "but he quickly had a commission given him. His Colonel saw that he was a gentleman and had been educated. Besides, although you might not think so as you look at him now, he is naturally very intelligent, and quick to understand his duties."

"And what did *you* do?"

"For a time I remained on at the factory, and then presently when the wounded began to come home I trained for a nurse. I don't know how it was, but during those years of our separation all our plans sank in the background. There seemed to be only one thing to think about. We must win the war. Perhaps you can understand."

"I think I can." And Gwithian nodded. "I was through it all, almost from the first day."

"And were you wounded?" she asked.

"Never once. From first to last I never had a scratch."

"Neither had Roger for a long time, then he was sent East; he joined Lord Allenby's forces." Then she shuddered again.

"Why do you shudder?"

"The war came to an end, and although I had not heard from him for more than a month, I hoped all was well. Then came that awful news."

"What news?"

"I had a telegram telling me that Roger was missing—supposed to be dead. Then all the world went black. You see, Roger was all I had. We were twins, and more than an ordinary brother and sister. I nearly went mad. I think I should have gone mad but for one thing. Our purpose came back to me with more power than ever. I had a feeling that father wanted to speak to me, and couldn't; that he was trying to tell me something, but was unable. And although no message came to me I knew I must never rest until his will was accomplished. For I knew what that will was; I was as sure as I am sure now, that, even in Heaven, my father couldn't be happy while we were being robbed. But now my work seemed harder than ever. I was alone and had everything to do myself."

Again she became silent, while Gwithian waited for her to continue. He had become more than ordinarily interested in her story and wanted to ask questions; but something forbade him. There was a look in her eyes which he could not understand.

"Of course, you will laugh at what I am going to tell you now," she went on; "but it doesn't matter. I dare say you will explain it by saying that I come of an old Cornish family, and that, like all Celts, I am superstitious. Anyhow, it doesn't matter."

"You need not fear that I shall laugh at you, whatever you tell me. Please remember that I too am a Celt."

"The war had been over some weeks," she continued, "but as you know, the hospitals were still full of wounded soldiers, and I remained nursing. Then, one night after a very hard day, I went out for a walk alone. The hospital was just outside London, and there was beautiful wooded country around. It was almost as quiet as it is here. The hospital was a large house which had been offered to the country during its need by a patriotic gentleman. There was a large garden all around it, and at one end of the garden were woods. I found my way into the woods, and while I was there I felt my father near me. Please understand me, I neither saw nor heard anything, in the ordinary way; but I had a consciousness that he was near me. Then something came to me. It was like nothing I had ever experienced before, but something said to me, 'Go to Cornwall. You mustn't go back to your old home, but you must go to Cornwall.'"

"You say you did not hear a voice or anything of that sort?" asked Gwithian.

"No, nothing of that sort; but just a strange compelling something. It was as near to me as you are near to me now."

"Yes, and then?"

"I didn't wait," replied the girl. "I came straight to Cornwall. I had barely enough money to pay my railway fare and I did not know what I should do when I got to the end of my journey. But I was sure my father wished it, so I came."

"But you did not come to Pendragon?"

"No. I felt I should be known there and I did not want to be known. Of course, it was a long time since I had lived at Pendragon. Roger and I were only children when we were sent away from home, and I had so altered in appearance that it was not likely that anyone would know me. But I did not come here. I went to St. Elizabeth."

"St. Elizabeth? Why, that's a parish about four miles away, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is the centre of a new mining district. Tin was discovered there several years ago, and directly the war came to an end the miners started working."

"But why did you go there?"

"I scarcely know, except that I felt I ought. Do you know anything about Cornish mining, Mr. Trewithen?"

"Yes, a little."

"Years ago hundreds of women were employed in the Cornish mines, and although the custom has practically died out, it still obtains in some places. I found work at the mine; I work there still."

Gwithian could not keep back the feeling of pity which surged up in his heart. He pictured the girl coming away from the hospital near London, at what she believed to be the call of duty, and settling down in a remote Cornish parish. He looked at her toil-worn hands and fancied her doing the work of a Cornish mine girl. The pathos of it appealed to him. She, the descendant of an old race, and, if her story were true, the rightful owner of a fine old home, toiling amidst rough, coarse surroundings. But she asked for no pity. Rather there was pride and confidence in her demeanour. Her large dark eyes shone with a steady light, while on her face was a look of steady purpose. A brave face it was; brave, strong, and beautiful.

"I got lodgings at the cottage of an old woman who lived alone some distance from the village. She was very poor, and glad of the little I could give her."

"Does she know who you are?"

The girl shook her head. "She knows nothing; she doesn't even know my name. To her I am Jane Smith. In her way, I suppose, she is quite a character. She asks no questions, and is not given to gossip. I think there is a sort of sympathy between us, for when I told her that I wanted to be left alone and not to be interfered with in any way, she seemed to understand."

"So far your story is quite plain," said Gwithian, "but what I fail to understand is why you came here."

"That is the most wonderful thing of all," cried the girl; "and it confirms me in my belief that I was led to Cornwall for a purpose. After I had been at Dorcas Udy's cottage for some time I was led to come here."

There was a far-away look in her eyes as she spoke, as if she were recalling something which was too wonderful for words.

"The war ended in November," she went on, "and it was in the beginning of the New Year that I came here to St. Elizabeth. Then, it was late in May—I woke up one night with a feeling that I had heard something. You must remember that Dorcas Udy's cottage is in a lonely lane and there is no other house near."

"Heard something?" queried Gwithian.

"Yes, heard something. I heard my own name 'Karenza, Karenza, Karenza,' repeated three times. It was months since I had heard the name, for as I told you, I was known to Dorcas as Jane Smith, and it seemed strange to me. I sat up in bed and listened, and I heard it again. It wasn't like a human voice at all; it might have been the sighing of the wind among the trees. And yet there was something familiar in it; it reminded me somehow of Roger. I got out of bed, went to the window, and looked out into the night. It was almost as bright as day, for the moon was nearly full, and was high in the sky. Then I heard the name again. 'Karenza, Karenza, Karenza.' It sounded far away, and yet it might have been near. I rushed downstairs, and opened the door, but I could see no one. Then, barefooted, I went out into the little garden and looked around, but I could see nothing. Then I heard my name again, three times repeated, as before, 'Karenza, Karenza, Karenza.' 'It's Roger,' I said to myself. 'I am sure that's his voice. But Roger is dead; how then can he speak to me?'"

"You are sure it was not a dream?" asked Gwithian.

The girl looked at him scornfully. "No, it was not a dream," she replied quietly; "if it were a dream I should not be here now."

"Well, what happened then?"

"I called out, 'Yes, Roger, where are you?'"

"'Cromlech Cottage,' he replied; 'come to Cromlech Cottage.'"

"What did you do then?"

"I came here," she replied. "I felt I could do no other. I understood nothing; but I had a kind of conviction that Roger wanted me and that I must do what he told me. It was now past midnight, but I went back to my room and hastily dressed. Of course, I remembered this house perfectly. It had belonged to my father, and although it was largely in ruins when I was a child, I often thought what a beautiful place it could be made. Anyhow, I came."

"Was that before Mr. Chirgwin bought it?"

"Yes," replied the girl, "it was nearly in ruins. The garden was a wilderness; the roof, in more than one place, had fallen in. It had not been occupied for many years."

Again she paused, and again a far-away look came into her eyes, as though her mind were wandering.

"You came here," said Gwithian. "Did you find anything?"

"Yes," she replied, "I found Roger lying in the porch. He was asleep there, but he looked like one dead. I suppose there are some wonderful stories of home-coming soldiers, but I have never heard of one just like his. Roger wasn't killed; but he was mad."

Involuntarily both of them looked at the sleeping youth as she spoke. His sleep was so quiet and peaceful, and there was so little suggestion of madness in his face, that her words seemed unreal; but as Gwithian remembered what had taken place hours before he felt like shuddering.

"How he got to England I do not know," went on the girl, "neither has he been able to tell me. That part of his life seems to have been wiped away from his mind and memory. What he has been able to tell me have only been the wanderings of a disordered brain. I gathered, however, that for a long time he was roaming around Palestine alone. He was wounded near Jerusalem, and I fancy from what he has tried to tell me that he hid himself in a vessel that was lying in Beyrout Harbour. Whether this was so or not, however, I am not sure. How he got to England is a mystery; but get here he did. At length, following what some might call a madman's fancy, he made his way to Cromlech Cottage."

"Has he told you his reason for coming here?" asked Gwithian.

"Of course you will smile," replied the girl, "but he believes that the secret of the will, which for years we have been trying to find, is here."

"But why here?" he asked.

"That I don't know," was her reply. "Again and again I have told him how foolish he is, but he holds to it that when the secret is found it will be found here."

"That explains a great deal," reflected Gwithian.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, the house is supposed to be haunted," was his answer, "for, of course, he has come here again and again. Was he ill when you found him asleep in the porch——"

"No, only exhausted. I think he landed at Plymouth; anyhow, he found his way here. He told me he was constantly calling to me during his journey. He has lived with me in Dorcas Udy's cottage ever since."

"And no one knows who he is?" asked the young man.

"No one. As I told you, Dorcas is not a talkative woman and does not discuss her affairs with anyone. She accepted my word that he was my brother who had come home from the war. I believe there are stories about him in the village, but no one knows anything. He is spoken of as an idiot, and I imagine there is a usual crop of rumours; but I take no notice of them; they don't matter."

"And the burden of his maintenance falls on you?" said Gwithian.

"Burden!" she exclaimed. "He is no burden, he is my brother. I only wish I could do more for him, but I only get a few shillings a week at the mine."

"He must be a great anxiety to you," suggested Gwithian.

"Only occasionally. Mostly he is quiet and tractable, but sometimes he is difficult to manage. There are times when he becomes obsessed with the idea that the secret of the will is here, and then I cannot keep him away. But he always comes at night."

For a few seconds she became silent again and then went on.

"He became almost uncontrollable when Mr. Chirgwin commenced restoring the house, and declared that he should never live here. He seems to have an idea that father has a special interest in it, and that it is a kind of sacrilege for anyone to live in it but a Pendragon. He discovered the means, too, whereby he could frighten the servants, and to get into the the house without being found out."

"That old mine level, I suppose?" Gwithian said. "I found it out myself."

"I felt sure you would. But Mr. Chirgwin was different. Roger is very cunning, too. I suppose madmen are. Anyhow, he determined that Mr. Chirgwin should not remain here," and she laughed a wistful little laugh. "Yes, he frightened them away. I tried to dissuade him, but he held to it that the secret of the will was here."

"But why here?" asked Gwithian again. "Assuming for the moment that your surmises about the will are true, this cottage is more than a mile away from the Pendragon Hall, and before Mr. Chirgwin bought it it had been untenanted for a long time. More than that, it had fallen into ruins. Why then should the secret of the will be here?"

"That's what I told him, but nothing I could say altered him. That was why he came here on the night of your arrival. I had no idea he was coming," she added. "He has done that several times. He waits until he thinks I am asleep and then rushes away alone. That was what he did on the night you came. When I discovered that he had gone I followed him."

Again Gwithian looked at the sleeping youth. The side of the face that was exposed to him was unscarred and almost handsome. His hair, too, was glossy and curly; it was only the other cheek that was distorted. It was altogether different from the hideous face he had seen as he looked out of the window.

Again the girl laughed a plaintive little laugh.

"I know it seems almost childish," she said, "but as I told you, he has a madman's cunning. I don't know how he got it, but he found a canvas mask, a hideous-looking thing, which he wore when he came here. I fancy that was how he frightened the servants."

"And so you allowed Chirgwin to be driven out of the house without letting him know the truth?" Gwithian said quietly.

"What could I do?" she asked quickly. "If I told him, everything would come out! And I dared not—I dared not! You won't betray my secret, will you? You couldn't;—it would be cruel. Besides, you said you wanted to help me. Promise me you will tell nothing!"

"I must have time to think," replied Gwithian.

"Oh, but can't you see? If you told anyone what I have told you, Roger would be in danger; he would be arrested as a dangerous madman. He would be taken away from me; he would be sent to an asylum or some other horrible place!

Then that woman would know everything, and all my plans would be destroyed. Look at him," she continued; "wouldn't it be a crime to lock him up? I know he's mad; but how did he become mad? A piece of shell disfigured the other side of his face, and he must have received such a shock that his brain was affected. But how? He was fighting for his country, Mr. Trewithen, and—and—— Don't you see?"

"And meanwhile——?"

"Meanwhile would you destroy all my hopes and plans?"

"But what plans have you?"

"Mr. Trewithen," and the girl spoke plaintively, "you will think I too am mad; but my brother has made me believe, in spite of myself, that our hopes lie here. That when the will is found it will be found here. You will keep our secret, won't you? Promise me you will."

Then almost before he knew the words had passed his lips, he had made the promise.

"And you will help us, won't you? Say you will."

"How can I help you?"

"I don't know. But something tells me that you can. You will, won't you?"

The girl's pleading eyes were fixed on his, and there was something in her voice that went to his heart.

"Yes, I promise," he said; but had he known what that promise would mean, it is to be doubted whether he would have made it.

CHAPTER XI

A NAME ON AN ENVELOPE

IT was not until Gwithian had made his promise that he fully realized the scene through which he had passed. It was now three o'clock in the morning, and with the exception of Cradock, who lay asleep upstairs, the three were alone in the silent house. For hours he had been like a man in a dream. He had come back from Pendragon Hall with his mind all awhirl with his experiences there. Try as he might he could not explain away the fact that the face which had been so faithfully portrayed by Roberto, the great Italian artist, was identical with the face he had seen in his dream; the face, too, which he had sketched with his own hand. The thought was too fantastic to believe; and yet it was true. Following that were the noises he had heard underneath the room in which he sat, and then the struggle with the mad youth.

In a way it was so uncanny, so unreal, that it might not have happened at all. But it had happened. Even now, Roger Pendragon lay asleep in the chair near by, while his sister, who had watched over him like a guardian angel, was pleading for his help.

What ought he to do?

He had often, since Doctor Borlase had told him the story of the will, wondered whether there was any truth in his surmises. On the one hand it certainly did seem strange that Roger Pendragon, after having declared that he had left practically everything to his children, should have left nothing. Stranger still, that he should not even have mentioned their names. There was another thing, too, difficult to explain: why did old Lawyer Trefry act so strangely? Was it all imagination on the doctor's part, or had what practically amounted to a crime been committed?

But how could it have been committed? On the doctor's own showing the lawyer's mind was not clear, while his memory was not to be depended on. It was well known that he had had a stroke some time before, and that ever since his faculties had been impaired. And yet——

How could Mrs. Pendragon, even if she had the will to do so, prepare a new will? How could it have found its way to Lawyer Trefry's office? How could it have been engrossed and witnessed? How could a false will have taken the place of the true one? No, no, it would not do. . . .

And yet it was all strange—unbelievable for that matter. The boy and the girl were sitting with him there in the early morning, homeless, friendless, penniless, and it made him feel that there must be something in the doctor's suspicions. Would a man who loved his children as Roger Pendragon was known to love them, have left them in such a way?

And yet he might. He must have been a weak man or he would not have allowed that woman to make him do her bidding; neither would he have sent them away from their home at her will and caprice. Why, therefore, could not such a man be persuaded by a clever woman to leave his property as she desired? Of course, it was unjust, it was terribly unjust; but there were scores of cases on record similar to this.

Still, it was mysterious, terribly mysterious. Indeed, ever since he had come to the county he had seemed to be surrounded by mystery.

Again the memory of the picture in the Library came back

to him. How could he explain it? He had never seen Roger Pendragon in his life; never known there was such a man; and yet the face he had seen in his dream was identical with that of the man he had seen hanging over the mantelpiece in the Pendragon Library.

And the children of this man were in the room with him now, and he had promised to help them. Of course, he had been mad to do this, and yet he did not see how he could have done otherwise. The girl had appealed to his pity, and to every shred of chivalry in his nature. If—if—— No, he would think no more about it; the whole business was too fantastic, too unbelievable, for any sane man's credence.

"We must be going now."

"Going! Going where?"

"Back to Dorcas Udy's cottage. There, see, Roger's waking. It's all right, Roger; don't you remember?"

The youth started up and rubbed his eyes.

"Where am I?" he asked. "Have I been asleep?"

"Yes. Don't you remember? You are at Cromlech Cottage."

"Cromlech Cottage! Oh yes, I shall find the truth here; the voices have always told me so."

Then turning to Gwithian, madness came into his eyes again.

"Who are you?" he gasped.

"Don't you remember?"

"Oh yes, you are the man I fought with. I meant to kill you. I thought—I thought—— No, I don't know what I thought. But I like you now. Karenza likes you, too; don't you, Karenza?"

"He's promised to help us," replied the girl. "But come, Roger, we must go back."

"Why should we go back? I like being here. Let us stay here with this man. You will keep us, won't you?" and again he turned to Gwithian.

"No, Roger, no, we must go back, or we shall be found out. Besides, I shall have to go to work presently."

"Found out? Oh yes, we'll go back."

The girl held out her hand to Gwithian.

"Thank you for being kind," she said, "and—and I feel so much better. You have given me hope in spite of myself."

He watched them as they went away together. They made a pathetic picture as side by side they walked down the garden path and out into the lane.

Karenza Pendragon was a heroine.

No other description would suffice. Even when the youth had been in full possession of his faculties it was the girl who had to think and act for both. It was she who schemed and planned; it was she who had to bear everything with patient fortitude. For nine years she had believed that she and her brother had been wronged; for nine years she had held to the determination that she would right that wrong.

But that was not all. When at length her brother had come back, little better than a raving maniac, she had given her life to caring for him. For something like two years she had watched over him, and had done her utmost to shield him from harm.

It was pitiful to think about it. Through the day she had worked at the mine; she, the only daughter of the man who had owned Pendragon Hall, had toiled rain or shine, and had devoted her little earnings to his maintenance. There was something beautiful in her devotion to him. He must have been a constant worry and anxiety to her, but week in and week out she had never faltered. Perhaps there was an element of madness in it all, but through everything he saw the girl's patient, unselfish love.

Karenza—Karenza Pendragon.

He had never heard the name before he came to Cornwall —Karenza. It was, the doctor had told him, an old Cornish name signifying Love. From her earliest childhood, if her story were true, she had been a prey to the machinations of an unscrupulous woman. Through her wiles she had been robbed of peace, home, youth, happiness—everything, and as far as he could see, nothing but hopelessness lay before her.

Again and again he reviewed the situation. Was there any truth in her beliefs?

What should he do? By some strange freak of chance, or, as some might call it, Providence, his life had become intermingled with the lives of these young people. Against his own will and inclination their pathways had crossed, and he, in an unguarded moment, had promised to help them. But how could he help them? Try as he might he could do nothing. The will was plainly written, it was duly signed and sealed. The probate had been made by Government officials, and the woman had been in possession for many years. Nothing could undo these facts. On the one hand were superstitions, inconclusive deductions, chimerical fancies, baseless beliefs. On the other were facts, incontrovertible facts. And yet——

Of course, he could not help being interested in this lonely girl; no one could. He thought of her trudging back to St. Elizabeth with her brother by her side. He pictured her, as hours later she would go to the mine and toil amidst uncongenial circumstances for a few shillings a week. He saw her burdened with a mad brother, for whom she chose to provide home and food.

What future had they? They might as well think they could move the rock of Gibraltar as to oust Mrs. Pendragon from Pendragon Hall.

Besides, did he wish them to do so? True, he had a romantic interest in Karenza and her brother, but he had also become interested in Marjorie Trounce. The girl had made a strong appeal upon him. Her laughing eyes, her irresponsible chatter, her evident desire for his company, were all vastly pleasing to him. And even were it in his power to help Karenza, it would be at the pain and loss of Marjorie.

He grew weary of thinking, and presently as the morning light began to dawn and he made his way to his bedroom, it was with a heavy heart.

Hours later, just as he was finishing his breakfast, he heard laughing voices in the lane outside, and looking out of the window he saw Marjorie Trounce accompanied by her brother.

"Aren't you shocked?" she laughed as he opened the door to her. "Fancy my daring to beard the lion in his den, without an invitation! But I couldn't keep away any longer. I was simply charmed by your description of your house, and so I made Harold drive this way. I don't know what mother will say, I am sure, when I tell her. Still, for propriety's sake I have brought Harold."

"There would be no impropriety if you hadn't," laughed Gwithian. The sight of the girl's merry face and sparkling eyes drove all sad thoughts away. "As you know, I gave you a general invitation, and it would have been simply criminal for you to pass by and not speak a kind word to a neighbour."

"There now, Harold, didn't I tell you? Mr. Trewithen is pleased to see us. *Do* say you are?" And she laughed into his eyes.

"I am more than pleased: I am delighted. I think I had the doldrums this morning, and you have driven them away."

"Anyhow, you must blame her," Harold Trounce said. "I won't share the responsibility. She just made me drive miles out of my way to come here."

"Yes, and you've only just finished breakfast, Mr. Trewithen. Aren't you ashamed of yourself? I had mine at half-past eight, while now it is nearly eleven. But come, you must show me everything. Isn't this just lovely? This old porch is just a dream. It makes one think of the porch at Pendragon Church. And those old lattice windows, why, they—— Tell me, Mr. Trewithen, have you seen the ghost yet? Doesn't it feel awfully eerie of a night when everything around is silent? Have you ever slept here alone? I should love to—and yet, I don't know, I am an awful coward."

Thus she rattled on, asking questions without waiting for an answer, and going from one subject to another without any apparent reason.

Gwithian was perfectly sincere in saying he was delighted to see her. During the time he had been eating his breakfast he had been again going over his experiences of the previous night. And everything had seemed so hopeless, so entirely hopeless. And now the chatter, the mischievous eyes, the freshness of this creature of the morning, had dispelled everything like sadness. He had thought Marjorie Trounce fair to look upon when he had seen her before, but she seemed to have added new charms that morning. The bloom was on her cheeks, and her lissom form was instinct with vitality.

"Oh-h," she cried, as she entered Gwithian's living-room, "fancy a man surrounding himself with all these luxuries."

"I didn't surround myself with them," laughed Gwithian. "I just took them as they stood. Mr. Chirgwin is responsible for all this."

"I admire his taste, anyhow."

"Yes, it is very comfortable," assented Harold, whose eyes quickly appraised the various items of furniture. "He must have spent a little fortune here. These chairs, the carpets, that old table, the bookcases, the writing-desk, I can't understand it."

"What can't you understand?"

"Why he left it all. When he bought the house he evidently intended to remain here. Think of all the money he must have spent. And yet, after living here less than a week, he left it."

"He did that because it was haunted," cried Marjorie.

"That's absurd," asserted Harold. "Fancy a full-grown man leaving such a place as this for such a reason. Have you seen any ghosts, Trewithen?"

Gwithian shook his head. "I'm not what the spiritualists

call psychic," he laughed. "Still, it's generally believed that strange things have been heard and seen."

"What things?"

"For example, my man maintains that the very table by which we are sitting has been moved by ghostly hands several feet from where it now stands."

"Oh, do tell us about it," cried the girl.

Gwithian related what both Cradock and Susan Jory had told him.

"But it's impossible," cried the girl; "the table is tremendously heavy, and it would take a strong man to move it. See" —and she tried to move the table—"I can scarcely move it an inch."

"And does your man really believe that?" inquired Harold.

"Undoubtedly he does; but I don't wish it talked about. You see, if there is any truth in it, I want to get at the bottom of it, and I don't wish the ghosts scared away."

"Don't let's talk about it any more," cried the girl with a little shudder; "it isn't pleasant to think about. Besides, see how bright it is outside. You must show me round your garden, Mr. Trewithen, and you must give me my first lesson in driving the car."

After that Gwithian saw a great deal of Marjorie Trounce, and during the next few weeks he visited Pendragon Hall several times and took the girl for motor rides round the country-side. There was no doubt about it; she was very favourably disposed to the young man; and he, glad of pleasant society, was not at all slow to take advantage of her evident pleasure in being with him.

"Pendragon is a different place since you came," she informed him one day. "Until then I was often lonely and bored, but you have made everything seem new. I had no idea that Cornwall was such an interesting county, or had such a lot of romantic associations. You are just a walking encyclopædia of the history of the county."

"I ought to be," replied the young man; "it's the most interesting county in England. No other part of the country has such a fine coast scenery or such a glorious history. Of course, as a Cornishman, I was always interested in it, but since I have come here it has revealed new wonders. And you have helped me to see those wonders, Miss Trounce."

"Have I?" she cried with sparkling eyes. "You are laughing at me. But do drop the 'Miss'; surely you know me well enough now to call me by my Christian name."

For a few seconds Gwithian's heart beat faster. The girl was throwing a kind of spell over him.

They were down by Gurnard's Head at the time standing on a spot from which they could see one of the finest pieces of coast scenery in the world. The day was gloriously fine; so fine that even the wild country-side, which in the winter looks bleak and forbidding, was now bathed in summer light. The sea was wonderful, too. In spite of the calmness of the day great waves broke on the mighty headland into showers of spray and foam. Years before, Gwithian had seen a picture of this same scene by Julius Ollson called "The Cornish Sea by Moonlight." The picture had greatly impressed him, and made him feel the mystic wonder and grandeur of the scene; but it was nothing to the reality. No artist, however gifted, could convey to the mind the imposing grandeur of that great wild coast. For a moment he was almost swept off his feet. Thoughts hitherto unknown came to him, and feelings to which he had been a stranger surged in his heart. What wonder? Deep was calling unto deep, and this young girl's eyes, which matched the blue of the sea, were telling him of its wonder. He had been in her company almost every day since the night on which he had dined at her mother's house, and she appealed to him strongly. There was something healthful and refreshing about her; she seemed a child of the open air, and was a part of the picture of that glorious country-side. He did not know whether he was in love or not, but he knew it was vastly pleasant to be there alone with her, pleasant to believe that she was fond of him. Up to now he had neither by word nor look suggested to her that she was more to him than a passing acquaintance; but the beauty of the day, the grandeur of the scene, and the fact that she stood by his side looking with laughing, yet pleading eyes into his, made him almost forget himself.

"We *are* friends, aren't we?" she pleaded, laying her hand on his arm.

"I hope so," he replied.

"And I don't think I ever had a friend, a real friend, before. That's why I want you to call me Marjorie. Will you?"

Words were on his lips which might have altered the whole future of his life, but he did not speak them. Something, he knew not what, forbade him. Above the roar of the waves as they rolled on the great headland, he seemed to hear a name which filled the horizon of his life. "Karenza, Karenza."

He had not thought very much of the pathetic figure of this

girl since the night on which she had visited him. His constant intercourse with Marjorie Trounce was perhaps responsible for this. Of course, her story was a romantic one, and it appealed to his chivalry. But there was something unreal, unearthly about her, while Marjorie Trounce was very real, very vital. The laughter in her voice, the sparkle in her eyes, had caused him almost to forget the lonely girl who had come to Cromlech Cottage in search of her mad brother.

But something, he could scarcely call it a voice, had brought the memory of Karenza back to him, and made him realize that he had promised to help her. But how could he help her? There was no possibility of such a thing. Besides, if he did, if he helped Karenza Pendragon to realize her hopes, would not Marjorie Trounce be impoverished, perhaps disgraced?

"I'd love to call you by your Christian name, Miss Trounce," he said, "but perhaps your mother would not like it."

"That's nonsense," replied the girl; "why——"

Before she could finish the sentence a party of trippers came near to where they were, and although in a sense Gwithian was disappointed, he was glad they had come. He felt as though he had had a great escape, although from what he could not have told.

"It is time for us to be getting home," he said a little awkwardly; "your mother will be anxious about you."

Both of them were silent as they made their way from the headland up to the inn where Gwithian had parked his car. Neither of them could have told what it was, but it seemed as though something had come between them, and sealed their lips.

More than an hour later, when Gwithian drove up to Pendragon Hall, Mrs. Pendragon stood on the steps to meet them, and there was a troubled look in her eyes. Perhaps she was not altogether pleased that her only daughter showed such preference for Gwithian's company. Naturally she was anxious that when her daughter married she should make what was called "a good match," and, as yet, she knew nothing about this man. It was true he was gentlemanly in appearance, and she was predisposed toward him; but who was he? As far as she could gather he was simply a mining engineer who had done well in Africa. He seemed very well off, and might be well connected; but was he the man she would choose for her daughter? Had she not been careless in allowing them to be so much together?

"I have brought your daughter home safely, Mrs. Pendragon. We have been to the Gurnard's Head, and have had a glorious

time. But I must get back now or Cradock will think that something has happened to me."

"But not before you have had some tea," she replied. "No, I shall take no excuse. Tea is quite ready"; and she led the way into the house.

She had a purpose in doing this. She wanted to talk with him and to learn more about him. A mother could not be too careful about whom she admitted into the bosom of her family. Gwithian accompanied her willingly. During the latter part of the journey home Marjorie had again cast her spell over him, and he was glad of the excuse to stay a little longer in her company.

What sports of chance we are! On what little things do the issues of life rest! Or, is there such a thing as chance in the world? Are not the minutest details of life arranged for, and controlled by, something Greater than chance? Certain it is that Gwithian's entrance into the room where tea was spread was laden with a kind of destiny. It was one of the smaller rooms of the house, and Mrs. Pendragon used it as a writing-room. On going towards the tea-table, Gwithian passed a writing-desk on which a heap of letters lay. He gave only a passing glance toward them, but that glance caused him to start; caused his heart to give a sudden leap. It was only a name that he saw on an envelope. There was an address written as well, but he could not tell what it was. Naturally he had no thought of reading it at all, but the name stood out boldly.

It was Adam Chignoweth.

CHAPTER XII

GWITHIAN AND THE DOCTOR

GWITHIAN proved a very dull companion during tea-time. While they were alone together Mrs. Pendragon asked him several pointed questions as to his people, where he had been brought up, and of his experiences in Africa. But Gwithian's mind seemed far away, and he answered her only vaguely. Even when Marjorie joined them he was dull and distrait; he could not enter into the spirit of the girl's lively sallies, and ere long pleaded an excuse for returning to Cromlech Cottage.

During his journey back to the house he drove almost like a man in a dream, and when at length he had put away his car, he threw himself into an arm-chair and for a long time sat in silence staring into vacancy.

Adam Chignoweth.

Of course he remembered the name. Doctor Borlase had, on his first visit, mentioned Adam Chignoweth as Lawyer Trefry's clerk, and as one who had signed Roger Pendragon's will.

Why should that woman write to Adam Chignoweth? This was the question that intrigued him. Of course, there was no reason why she shouldn't; but what was her purpose in doing so?

He went over his first conversation with Doctor Borlase, sentence by sentence, and as he did so his interest in the story of Karenza Pendragon revived. The memory of the girl's face came back to him, the devotion which she had bestowed upon her brother appealed to him. . . .

His mind flew to the time he had spent with Marjorie Trounce down by the great headland. He recalled the bright light in her eyes, the eagerness of her voice, the pressure of her hand upon his arm. He had been near forgetting himself, near to yielding to the impulse of the moment, so great had been the girl's witchery over him. Then suddenly, from nowhere, as it seemed to him, had come the name "Karenza," and as if by some magic the spell had been broken. For days he had well-nigh forgotten all about Karenza, and had never given a moment's thought as to how he might redeem his promise to her. But now that promise had come back to him and he must fulfil it. That was why something seemed to have come between him and Marjorie, why a weight had been placed upon his lips.

Then, when he had seen the name of Adam Chignoweth upon the envelope which Mrs. Pendragon had written, a score of bewildering thoughts had come unbidden to his brain.

Of course it had no meaning; how could it have? Mrs. Pendragon might have had a hundred reasons for writing to this one-time confidential clerk of her late husband's lawyer. It might be that even in his retirement the old man might be useful to her.

And yet the question haunted him, persistently haunted him. Doctor Borlase had told him that in his perturbation about the late Roger Pendragon's will he had visited Adam Chignoweth, and that the old man had assured him that the will which the lawyer had read on the day of the funeral was the will he had helped to draw up, and which Roger Pendragon had dictated to him. Everything seemed plain and straightforward; and yet—and yet——

He went over the story again, but everything was confusion worse confounded.

More than once he had been tempted to tell Doctor Borlase what he had discovered, tempted to tell him that Karenza Pendragon and her brother Roger lived in the neighbouring parish; but he had never done so. Why, he could not tell, except that Karenza had pleaded for his silence.

Like a man in a dream he dressed for dinner, and during the meal he had no knowledge of what he ate or drank. Directly it was over, however, he went to the garage, brought out his car and drove to Pendragon Village.

Yes, the servant told him, Doctor Borlase was at home; he had just finished dinner and was alone in his surgery.

"Now this is what I call neighbourly," the doctor greeted him. "I have had a deuce of a hard day and am dead tired. But I *am* glad to see you."

A minute later the two men had loaded their pipes, and, seated in deep arm-chairs, were smoking vigorously.

"Aren't you well?" asked the doctor presently.

"Never so well in my life," replied Gwithian.

"That's mean," rejoined the doctor. "Of course, I hoped you had come for me to prescribe for you."

"I have. But not physic. Don't you remember your Shakespeare?"

"What's Shakespeare to do with it?"

"Everything. Don't you remember those words of Macbeth?—

"'Canst thou minister to a mind diseased?'"

"Of course I do. But is your mind diseased? Have you murdered some Duncan?" And the doctor laughed heartily.

"Not yet."

"Has the ghost been troubling you?" he asked curiously. "Have you seen anything, heard anything?"

"I think the ghost is laid," replied Gwithian. . . . "I say, Borlase, would you mind telling me that story about Roger Pendragon's will again?"

"Why should I? Have you any fresh interest in it? I can tell you this, my dear fellow, the gossip about you has changed."

"In what way?"

"People are no longer troubling about your ghost; they are asking whether you and Miss Trounce are going to make a match or not. Now don't frown. When an eligible man is seen constantly motoring around the country-side with a very attractive girl, people will talk, you know."

Gwithian laughed uneasily. What if the doctor knew how near he had been to declaring himself that day?

"Seriously, Borlase," he said, "I have thought a great deal about that story, and I have something to tell you."

"Don't tell me you are engaged to Miss Trounce."

"No, my dear fellow. Do you think the only daughter of the owner of Pendragon Hall would engage herself to a passing stranger such as I? No, it has nothing to do with that."

"About the ghost, then?"

"Perhaps so. I will let you judge."

Thereupon he told the doctor of the visit of the Vicar, and how afterwards they had gone to the old church together. After that followed a recital of Gwithian's experiences.

"What caused it I do not profess to know," he said; "but I saw a hand outlined, while the forefinger of the hand pointed to the Pendragon vault."

"By Jove! that's funny!" exclaimed the doctor when he had finished his story. "What happened then?"

"Moss and I left the church together, and after that I was introduced to the young Trounces," and he described their journey back to the Hall.

"Is that all?" asked the doctor presently.

"No; it's not all. What I have to tell you now is more remarkable still." Thereupon he went on to describe the dream, or whatever it was, that came to him as he sat alone in Cromlech Cottage.

"You saw the face, you say?" exclaimed the doctor excitedly.

"Quite plainly."

"Can you describe it to me?"

"I can do better than that," remarked Gwithian. "The whole incident made such an impression on my mind that when I woke I made a sketch of the face."

"Tell me what it was like."

Gwithian obeyed. As well as he was able he described the ghostly figure he had seen.

"Heavens! it might be Roger Pendragon," exclaimed the doctor. "And you say he wore a ring on the little finger to his left hand?"

"A curiously shaped ring in which a quaintly carved stone was set."

Doctor Borlase started to his feet and began to pace the room.

"I remember it," he cried; "he habitually wore that ring; it was buried with him, so I am told. Let me think a minute, my dear fellow, you have almost startled me out of my senses."

A silence fell between them; neither spoke a word for a long time.

"I am afraid I am a great deal of a materialist," broke out the doctor presently, "and I imagine that all this can be explained by natural means. As you say, your dream was simply a repetition of what you had seen in the church."

"But does that explain what I saw, or fancied I saw, in the church?" asked the young man.

The doctor was silent again, then broke out:

"Very strange things happened during the war. I was told only a short time ago about a mother, who, on bidding good-bye to her son, who was just leaving for the Front, made him promise that if anything happened to him he would let her know. A little while later when passing from one bedroom to another she saw her son; he came toward her and stood still for a minute and then vanished out of sight. Mind you, she saw him plainly, noticed that he was dressed in his lieutenant's uniform, noted, too, the look in his eyes. Immediately she remembered his promise and felt certain that he was killed."

"And was he killed?" asked Gwithian.

"Yes, killed that very day and hour."

"Still, that's very different from what I have been telling you. Roger Pendragon was no friend of mine; I never saw him in my life. Besides, according to your account, he died ten years ago."

"Yes, that's so," replied the doctor musingly. "It might seem as though he were an old friend of yours and wanted to tell you something."

"But why should he want to tell me anything? If it had been you I could have understood it, but he never saw me; never heard of me. Besides, I have not finished yet."

"What! Is there more? Tell me."

"You know Pendragon Hall, of course?"

"I went there when Roger was alive, but since he has been dead I have never been in the house. But what of that?"

"You know that picture which hangs over the mantelpiece in the library?"

"Perfectly."

"I went there to dinner some time ago," Gwithian told him; "and just before I left, Moss called me into the library to show me some books I was interested in; it was then I saw the picture."

"Well, what of it?" asked the doctor, for Gwithian had become silent.

"Is the picture a good one?" he asked. "Does it faithfully portray Mr. Roger Pendragon?"

"It's a masterpiece," replied the doctor. "Roberto never did anything finer or more lifelike. Why do you ask?"

"Because," replied Gwithian slowly, "that picture exactly corresponds with the sketch I made after I had had the dream I told you of. I don't pretend to explain it; doubtless if we better understood the laws of life about which we are now ignorant it could be explained; but I know nothing of it. The fact remains, however."

"Have you that picture? Did you bring it with you?" The doctor spoke eagerly, almost breathlessly.

"No; but it is at Cromlech Cottage at this moment."

"May I see it?"

"My car is outside the door; I can take you to it in a few minutes."

"Come," cried the doctor eagerly; "don't let's waste a second."

Ten minutes later they were in Gwithian's sitting-room. The sheet of paper was before them while, like a man in a dream, the doctor gazed at the face which Gwithian had roughly sketched.

"It's Roger! It's Roger!" he said in a hoarse whisper. "You are not joking, Trewithen; what you have told me is true?"

"Every word."

"And you have never told anyone else about this?"

"No one. Whom should I tell?"

"And you sketched this before you saw the picture? Pardon me asking again, but I am shaken, man!—I am shaken!"

"I have described every circumstance faithfully," replied Gwithian. "As I said, the dream, or whatever it was, impressed me so much, and the outlines of the man's face were so vivid to me, that, there and then, I seized a pencil and drew—what you see. I cannot explain why I did it except that I was so tremendously impressed—I acted on a sort of impulse. As you may imagine, when I saw the picture hanging over the mantelpiece in the Pendragon library, and when Harold Trounce told me it was a faithful portrait of his stepfather, I was bewildered."

"But you didn't say anything to Trounce?"

"I have never said a word to anyone until to-night. You are the first man to whom I have mentioned it."

"It's all so strange, so unbelievable," cried the doctor, "and yet—yes, that's my old friend Roger Pendragon to the life. What's the meaning of it, Trewithen? Have you any more to tell me?"

Gwithian was sorely tempted to tell him of the coming of Karenza Pendragon and her brother ; but he did not. The girl had made him promise that he would keep her coming a secret, that he would breathe no word of his knowledge concerning her and her brother. Besides, he felt sensitive about mentioning her name.

" No, I can tell you nothing more ; but, as you may imagine, I thought over this a good deal. Why I should have been dragged into it I don't know, but it has made me tremendously interested. Perhaps it's because I am living in the house which at one time belonged to the Pendragons. Perhaps—anyhow, I acted on impulse to-night and came to see you ; I wanted to hear again the story which you told me on the first day we met. I wanted you to tell me more about Roger Pendragon."

A long conversation followed, during which Doctor Borlase retailed to him many of the things he remembered concerning his friend. Told him of his first wife and what a beautiful girl she was, told him of the birth of the children, and of their mother's death. Described Roger's agony at her death ; told of his helplessness, and of the many conversations they had together.

" How long had his first wife been dead before he married again ? " asked Gwithian.

" Something like three years ; perhaps it might be more," replied the doctor. " There was a slight estrangement between us after he met Mrs. Trounce. He instinctively felt, I suppose, that I should not like her, and would disapprove of his action. Anyhow, we seldom met during that time."

" Who was Mrs. Trounce ? " Gwithian asked.

" I believe she came of a very good family farther up the county. Her father was a small landowner and was very poor. Trounce —the man she married—was a lawyer, I think, in Bodmin or Liskeard. He died two or three years after their marriage. But I am not certain about that. All I know is that Roger and the woman met at a house up somewhere near Lostwithiel and that he became enamoured of her."

He repeated the part of the story about the newly married couple taking up their residence at Pendragon Hall and of the way she had schemed and planned to persuade Roger to send the twins away from home. Finally he again told him of his friend being taken ill, and what he had said to him on his death-bed.

" You are sure that he told you that he had made a will leaving the Hall and the bulk of his property to his own children ? *Sure*, mark you ? "

"I am not likely to have any doubt about it," replied Borlase. "Why do you ask?"

"I was only wondering. According to your own account, he was very ill at the time. Did he actually tell you he had made the will, or that he *meant* to make the will? You must remember, Borlase, that you must have been very excited at the time. Pendragon was your friend and you were in a state of anxiety about him. I am asking this in the light of after events."

The doctor was silent for a few seconds; he seemed to be thinking deeply.

"I am certain he told me that he had made such a will, and that Lawyer Trefry had drawn it up," he said slowly.

"And yet you say that Lawyer Trefry did not seem certain about it at the reading of the will on the day of the funeral. Surely no lawyer would forget the terms of a will like that. Roger Pendragon must have been a very important client. The property was large and Trefry would have known if he had dispossessed his own children and left everything to his wife and her heirs. I could have understood, if there had been a division of the property, that he might have been in doubt as to the exact amounts. But to forget the terms of such a will as that beats me."

"Yes, I have thought of all that a hundred times," replied the doctor; "but there are certain things that you must bear in mind, Trewithen. First of all, Trefry was the legal adviser of half the landed gentry for miles around, and thus Pendragon would not be so important as you seem to think. For another thing, he was an old man, and of the old-fashioned order of lawyers. He was very fond of his wine, too, and could by no stretch of imagination be called either shrewd or clever. Indeed, during the last years of his life a great deal of his work was left to Adam Chignoweth, his confidential clerk. Added to that was the fact that he had had a stroke, and was terribly anxious that no one should think of him as one who had not all his faculties."

"And you are *certain* that Pendragon believed on his death-bed that he had made a will giving the house and the main bulk of his property to his own children?" persisted Gwithian.

"I am," replied the doctor.

"And how do you account for the will that was read?"

"That's where you have me; I can't account for it."

"But if you are right it must be accounted for. A will is a tangible thing. It was not made hundreds of years ago; it was, according to your account, drawn up, signed, and witnessed

only a few years ago. It would have to undergo the scrutiny of those who made probate of it—and such men are not fools."

"I know, I know," broke in the doctor. "Had there been a shadow of a case I would have gone into the matter myself; but I couldn't see a loophole anywhere. Everything was plain and straightforward except for one thing. His own children were not mentioned, *not even mentioned.* Everything was left to that woman without any restrictions whatever."

"What kind of a man was Adam Chignoweth?" asked Gwithian. Why it was he could not tell, for although he had been uppermost in his mind during the whole time they had been together, he had never mentioned his name until now.

"He was Trefry's right-hand man," replied the doctor. "Although not a fully fledged lawyer, he knew far more about the law than his chief. As I told you, I went to him after the funeral, but I could get nothing out of him beyond what I already knew."

"Was he faithful to his employer?" asked Gwithian.

"As faithful as a dog. No man could be more reliable than he. I almost wonder at it, too, because old Trefry never paid him well. He must have had many offers from elsewhere, but he stuck to his old master through thick and thin. He was as poor as a church mouse, too; he had a big family dragging on his heels. How he managed to set them up in life I don't know, but I suppose his wife was a very capable woman."

"You say he retired immediately after Trefry's death?"

"Yes, he went to live with one of his married daughters, whose husband had taken a farm not far from Lostwithiel. That was where I saw him; but I am told that he lives at Fowey now."

Gwithian spoke no word, but he made a mental note of what the doctor had said. He determined to drive to Fowey on the following morning. . . .

CHAPTER XIII

ADAM CHIGNOWETH

IT was late at night when Gwithian drove the doctor back to Pendragon Village, and in spite of the latter's persuasion he would not go into the house again. He wanted to be alone to think about what he had seen and heard.

"By Jove! Trewithen, but I shan't sleep to-night," remarked the doctor just before they parted. "I was dead tired when you came, but now I feel as though I shall never be tired again.

You have made me feel as though my old friend were alive and wanted to speak to me."

"Perhaps I ought not to have bothered you," replied Gwithian, "but I could not keep silent any longer. Of course, what I have told you may seem a hotchpotch of unbelievable nonsense; but I haven't been able to get it out of my mind."

"They make me feel that Shakespeare got very near the truth when he said, 'There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy,'" remarked the doctor.

He was silent for a few seconds and then burst out, "I wonder where little Karenza is now?"

"You say you have not seen her since her father's funeral?" remarked Gwithian.

"Never. Sometimes I blame myself for not having kept in touch with those children; but what could I do? I did try to find out where they had gone, but I discovered that immediately after the reading of the will they had left school, and had completely vanished. Then I gave everything up as hopeless."

"Do you know if anything passed between them and Mrs. Pendragon after the will was read?" asked Gwithian.

"No, I do not. It was gossiped that there was an awful scene between them; but I know nothing for certain. I tell you what, Trewithen, that woman is suffering the torments of hell."

"She seems to be quite enjoying her torments anyhow," laughed Gwithian.

"But think, my dear fellow. She must know that even although the will may be legally valid, it was never her husband's intention that his children should be homeless and destitute. No, no, there is a great deal that doesn't meet the world's eye."

"It makes one doubt the old saying that 'truth will out,' doesn't it? But I must go now. Good-bye."

The two men parted on the doctor's doorstep, the one to go into his surgery and to think again of what he had heard concerning his old friend, the other to drive back to his lonely cottage, his mind seething with plans as to what he should do.

The following morning Gwithian breakfasted early, and, getting out his car, started for Fowey. More than once during his journey it seemed to him that he was going on a wild-goose chase. He had no plans in his mind, no idea as to what questions he should ask Adam Chignoweth even if he were fortunate enough to find him.

The more he thought of it the more he became convinced that while Roger Pendragon had made an unjust will—perhaps

under the influence of a woman whose slave he had allowed himself to be—there might be circumstances of which he knew nothing. Doubtless, too, the doctor was prejudiced against Mrs. Pendragon, and had allowed himself to believe all sorts of foolish things. As for Karenza and her half-mad brother, what possible credence could be attached to their statements? In any case, he had nothing to do with it. He had come to Cornwall on impulse. He had taken possession of a lonely cottage, and, on the whole, he was enjoying himself thoroughly. Why then should he trouble about something with which he had no possible connection?

No, he would turn the car, drive to Pendragon Hall, seek out Marjorie Trounce and spend that day of happy sunshine with her.

Nevertheless, he steadily drove northwards, and more than once broke the speed limit in his anxiety to reach his destination.

Presently he passed through St. Austell, and then, on reaching Par, turned to the right and followed the lane which led to the quaint little town of Fowey.

Gwithian fell in love with Fowey the moment he entered it. The steep hills, the narrow, crooked streets, the jumble of houses, and withal the feeling of homeliness and restfulness, captured his heart immediately. It was true the air was not so invigorating as on the northern coast, but the place had the spirit of Cornwall. Nobody was in a hurry; for that matter nobody seemed to have anything to do. Doubtless, work was done and the business of life carried on, but the people did it in such a leisurely way as to appear not to be working at all. Every one greeted every one else with a pleasant smile and a friendly word. Boatmen hung around the little harbour smoking their pipes and discussing the gossip of the day. Even the tradesmen seemed to have nothing to do, although it was their busy season. Yes, Fowey was a place of rest; a place to be lazy in; and withal a place to love. Gwithian left his car at the garage of the Fowey Hotel, and then clambered down the steep streets toward the sea. It was now eleven o'clock in the forenoon, and the day was hot.

"I am glad I came here, anyhow," he reflected; "just to see the place is worth a forty-mile drive."

He caught sight of the post office and he was immediately reminded of the purpose of his visit. He scarcely expected to find Adam Chignoweth; he didn't much want to; and even if he did he didn't know what to say to him.

The girl in the post office received him haughtily, which, being

a Government official, was what she ought to do. For let it be remarked here that post-office assistants, telephone-operators, and people of that order belong to a class by themselves. I am not now speaking of the dear old ladies who keep village post offices, who are invariably polite and always delighted to gossip ; but the up-to-date young persons who regard it as beneath their dignity to attend to customers who want to buy a book of postage-stamps. Of course, they will sell them ; but they do it as though they were granting the customer a favour, and with an air of " I'll do it this time, but please don't bother me again."

The young lady on this occasion fancied there might be such a person as Adam Chignoweth, but she was not sure. Had Gwithian not better ask one of the postmen ? At length, however, she condescended to tell him that there was such a person as Adam Chignoweth living in Fowey, and that the house in which he lived was called " Dahlia Cottage." Where " Dahlia Cottage " was she didn't " knaow " ; she rather fancied it was in a working-class district. Perhaps if he went to the police station he might be able to find out where it was.

These scraps of information Gwithian was able to extract only little by little, and they were given in the manner such as the late Grand Duchess of Hesse might use.

" Want a boat, sir ? " an old fisherman greeted him as he went down toward the sea.

" Where can I go to better than this ? " asked Gwithian.

" Nowhere, sir, as far as I d'knaw."

" Then why should I want a boat ? "

" Well, 'tes this way : there be some people who do always want to be somewhere wher' they bean't, so to spaik, and I thought you might be one of they."

" And you get your living by those people ? "

" Well, as you may say, I spoase I do. But for the 'ope of gettin' a shillin' or two I should never move away from 'ere. But then, there be some people who do think that the foot of the rainbow is always in the next field, so to spaik. That's why they be always on the move."

" Are you a Fowey man ? "

" Lived 'ere all my life."

" I suppose you know every one ? "

" I used to afore so many fresh people comed 'ere to live, and I do knaw most o' they. Can I taake 'ee anywhere, sir ? 'Cause I caan't 'ford to stop craakin' with you if thereby I do lose a customer."

"Of course you can't. Where would you advise me to go if I wanted to hire your boat?"

"Well, sir, you could go up the river t'wards Lostwith'l, or you could go out to oppen say and go down Mevagissey way, or up Polperra way. Or ef you be poor and 'ave only a shillin' to spend, you could go jist 'cross to Polruan."

"I am very poor," laughed Gwithian, "so I will only have a shilling's worth."

He got into the boat as he spoke, while the man prepared to row him across the narrow strip of water which divided Polruan from Fowey.

"I suppose the town is different from what it used to be?" Gwithian remarked presently.

"Deffer'nt? Tedn' the same place. Up-country ways be all the fashion with we now, and I don't like up-country ways."

"Well, it's no wonder people come here; it's a lovely place."

"So straangers do say, but I don't think much of it myself."

"You must be very fond of flowers down here."

"Flowers? What made 'ee think that?"

"Only that I heard someone talking of a place called 'Dahlia Cottage.' I suppose it's surrounded by a garden full of dahlias?"

"Nothin' of the sort. I d'knaw it very well. Why, there edn' a dahlia to be seed. I d'knaw the man that do live there, too. Adam Chignoweth 'ee's called, one of the closest men I've ever seed. 'E'll never even give 'ee the time of the day. Why, you can see et from 'ere. There, you can see the 'otel, caan't 'ee? Well, up be'ind the 'otel there's a row of 'ouses; then be'ind that there is another row. Well, be'ind that other row is Dahlia Cottage."

"It looks a nice house," remarked Gwithian.

"And it do look what 'tes. Aw iss, Adam must be a man very well off; but I don't believe that, for all 'is money, 'ee's what you call a 'appy man. You don't knaw un, do 'ee, sir?"

"No, I never saw him in my life."

"I spoase I am a bit of a character myself," went on the boatman. "What some would call a philosopher, although I make no boast 'bout et. I never was a great worker; don't b'lieve in work. My old mawther used to say I was born with 'faiver lurgy,' that es, with two stummicks to ait and noan to work. Because of that I 'ave never ben one to make money. But I'll bet you a pint of beer that I'm 'appier than Adam Chignoweth."

"Why do you say that?"

"'Cause 'ee d'always look as though 'ee'd swallowed a pint

of vinegar for 'is breakfast. There 'ee es in that nice 'ouse, with a sarvant to do 'is chores, and everything nice about 'im ; but 'ee do never laugh nor say a kind word to nobody. Now, what I say is this, sir, ef money is worth anything it'll make us 'appy. Yet 'ee've got money but 'ee edn' 'appy ; anybody can see that."

"How did he get his money ?"

"Don't knaw no more than a man in the moon. He comed to live 'ere a few year agone, and 'ee've lived 'ere ever since. I've 'eerd that he lived with 'is daughter, who is a farmer's wife, afore he comed 'ere ; but I don't knaw fer sartain. Anyhow, you don't want to 'ear me craakin' about people ; and 'ere we be to Polruan. Be 'ee goin' to stay 'ere long, sir, makin' so bould ?"

"No, I will just go for a walk over the hill, and then come back again. I want to be back at the hotel in time for lunch."

"Then I'll wait for 'ee, sir. Taake your time, I be'ant in no pore. You doan't 'appen to 'ave a bit of 'bacca to spare, do'ee ?"

Gwithian filled the boatman's pouch and then made his way up along the street. Presently he found a seat on the top of the headland and sat for some time looking out on the shining sea.

He had found Adam Chignoweth. At least he had learnt where he lived ; learnt without difficulty. He had discovered, too, that he was a well-to-do man, and that he lived in comfort. He had almost hoped, at least he had told himself so, that he would not find Adam Chignoweth ; or that if he did, his foolish suspicions might be immediately destroyed. Doctor Borlase had spoken of him as poor as a church mouse, who had with difficulty reared a large family ; and yet the old boatman had spoken of him as living in affluence. What did it mean ?

He turned to look at the house which had been pointed out to him. Yes, it was a comfortable villa, surrounded by a pleasant garden. No man could live there on less than four or five hundred pounds a year. How did he get it ? And why should he be miserable ? Gwithian rose to his feet impatiently. What a fool he was ! What right had he to be troubled about Adam Chignoweth ? For that matter, what right had he to trouble himself about Doctor Borlase's story at all ? He would think no more about it.

He went down to the little landing-place again and found the boatman waiting for him.

"Beutaful 'bacca, sir, beutaful ! I never enjoyed a smoke more in my life," the boatman greeted him.

But Gwithian took no notice ; indeed, he was strangely quiet and taciturn during the row back to Fowey.

"I am glad I came, though," he reflected, as he wended his way up the hill toward the hotel; "it's been a pleasant change, and Fowey is one of the sweetest, homeliest little places I ever saw. I will get some lunch and then I will drive back by way of Bodmin and the Goss Moors."

When he had had his lunch, however, he did not go to the garage; instead he climbed the hill at the back of the hotel and made his way toward the house which the boatman had pointed out to him.

Yes, that was it. Its name was plainly inscribed on the garden gate—"Dahlia Cottage." But it was more than a cottage; it was quite a villa, and was evidently well cared for. The path leading up to the house was well gravelled and carefully weeded. The flower-beds cut out of the grass-plots were in their summer glory. Roses bloomed everywhere, and the veranda, which almost surrounded the house, had been newly painted. The window-sashes and doors also gave evidence that the painter and decorator had lately been at work there. Not a sign, not a suggestion of want or poverty was to be seen anywhere. Gwithian stood at the garden gate for some time; he was angry with himself for doing so, for paying so much attention to a house in which he told himself he had no interest. And yet he stood and watched.

He saw a man come out of the front door, walk down the garden path, and a minute later take a chair to the shadow of a high fuchsia hedge and sit down. A most respectable man, clad in broadcloth. Had he been pointed out to a visitor as the Mayor of the town; as a considerable property owner; as the head of a respected and trusty firm of solicitors; as a retired clergyman; or anything that denoted order and respectability, that visitor would have accepted the information without question.

Gwithian, still angry with himself for doing so, opened the garden gate and went toward the recumbent figure.

"Mr. Adam Chignoweth, I believe."

The man gave a slight start natural to one who suddenly heard his own name, and looked at Gwithian scrutinizingly.

"That is my name, sir. Is there anything I can do for you?" The voice was somewhat hard and metallic, but he spoke with perfect respect. Gwithian saw at a glance that Mr. Adam Chignoweth was no ordinary man. He looked about seventy years of age and was strong and vigorous. He wore a black, soft felt hat, which gave him a clerical appearance, and which hid the shape of his head. His face was cleanly shaven except

for a fringe of grey beard which grew around the upper part of his neck. The chin was square and firm, the nose was somewhat large.

"Do you wish to see me—speak to me?" And Adam Chignoweth's eyes flashed interrogatively at the young man.

"Yes, if you are Mr. Adam Chignoweth, one-time confidential clerk of Mr. Trefry."

"Have you come on business concerning Mr. Trefry's estate? He died several years ago, and since his demise I have had no dealings with the law in any fashion."

"I once knew a Tom Trefry, who, I was told, was the youngest son of Mr. Thomas Trefry. I have lost sight of him for some time; I wondered whether you would have any knowledge as to where he is."

The man gave Gwithian a curious, almost suspicious glance. "Was that why you came here?" he asked. "Surely I am not the man to come to for information about young Mr. Tom. Anyhow, I don't know where he is; I haven't heard of him for years. He was a great trouble to his father," he added.

"And you are out of touch with Mr. Trefry's family?" asked Gwithian. He felt he was on somewhat delicate ground, and did not know how best to approach the thing he had in his mind.

"Really, sir. I don't wish to be disrespectful; but before I answer any further questions I should like to know whom I am addressing, and why you came to see me. I don't seem to remember your face," he added.

"You wouldn't," replied Gwithian. "I am a total stranger to you. But I happened to get into a boat two or three hours ago, in order to get across to Polruan, and the boatman mentioned your name."

"Mentioned my name? Why did he mention my name? I have nothing to do with any of the boatmen of Fowey."

He had become alert, suspicious, and Gwithian more than ever felt the need of being careful.

"The mention of your name came around rather curiously"—and Gwithian laughed as he spoke. "And yet perhaps it was not so curious after all. I happened to say to him that I had heard of a house called 'Dahlia Cottage' and he told me that Mr. Adam Chignoweth lived there."

"Why should you mention 'Dahlia Cottage'?"

"I do not know why I should. I heard it accidentally, and I suppose I should have forgotten it altogether but that it became associated with your name."

"And what is my name to you?"

"I remembered hearing you spoken of as confidential clerk to Mr. Thomas Trefry."

"In what connection? And, by the way, you haven't told me your name yet."

"My name would mean nothing to you," replied Gwithian.

"I should like to hear it all the same."

"It would mean nothing to you," he repeated. "I am only a wanderer on the face of the earth."

"Then why did you come to see me? What has my name to do with you?"

"I have told you in part," replied Gwithian. "I had no idea of coming to Fowey until a few hours before I started. Then, hearing your name, and remembering that you were the confidential clerk of Mr. Thomas Trefry, father of Tom Trefry, whom I'd lost sight of for some time, I wondered if you could give me any information about him."

"I am unable to do so, sir. He may be alive, he may be dead. He may be in England, he may be in some other part of the world. I have not the slightest knowledge of his whereabouts. Is that all you wish to see me about? If it is, there is no need for me to detain you any longer."

"It's not all," replied Gwithian, still trying to speak casually, "but I have been reminded since I came here that the world is very small."

"Of course, that is a very original remark; but may I ask you in what way you have been reminded of it?"

Gwithian felt that he had approached this man awkwardly, clumsily; that he should have made some plan whereby he could speak to him without arousing suspicion. Now he saw asperity in his every look, and a suggestion of suspicion in his every word.

"I know I am guilty of what seems like impertinence," replied the young man; "but as I told you, I have been a wanderer on the face of the earth. For example, I was in the Army during the war."

"Very natural, very proper. But may I ask what I have to do with that?"

"Only this," replied Gwithian. "There was a young man in the Army at the same time as I was, whose story interested me very much. So much so in fact, that being somewhat of a busybody, I determined that if ever I had the opportunity I would try to find out more about him."

Mr. Adam Chignoweth looked puzzled.

"I am all in the dark," he said. "What young man? What story? Why should you mention it to me?"

"The name of the young man was Roger Pendragon," replied Gwithian.

Adam Chignoweth gave a perceptible start which Gwithian was not slow to notice.

"What do you know of Roger Pendragon?" he asked.

"He was in the Army," replied Gwithian.

"Have you ever met him, talked with him?"

"Yes."

"When was that?"

"I don't remember the exact date; but I have met him."

There was no doubt about it; the mention of Roger Pendragon's name had made an impression on Adam Chignoweth. He moved uneasily in his chair and looked toward Gwithian as if he wanted to ask him questions.

"Did you ever hear him mention my name?"

"I don't think I did."

"Then why did you connect us?"

It was Gwithian's turn to look at the other suspiciously now. There could be no doubt about it, the man was disturbed. His lips quivered, and Gwithian was sure he saw a look in his eyes that might be interpreted to mean fear.

"Did you know Roger Pendragon?" he went on.

"Why do you ask?"

"It would be quite natural if you did," remarked Gwithian, still trying to speak in a casual voice. "You were the confidential clerk of Mr. Trefry, and Mr. Trefry was Mr. Roger Pendragon's legal adviser."

"But you were speaking of young Roger Pendragon," replied the other. "Mr. Pendragon, senior, died before the war broke out."

"That is true. You made his will, didn't you?"

Was Gwithian mistaken, or did the man's cheeks assume a leaden pallor? Was there not something curious in his expression? Did he look for a moment like a man overcome? If he did, it was only for a moment; a few seconds later Adam Chignoweth was cold, calm, and self-possessed again.

"No, I did not make Mr. Pendragon's will," he replied. "As you say, Mr. Trefry was his legal adviser, and naturally he drafted his will."

"And you had nothing to do with it?"

"Excuse me, sir, but your curiosity is somewhat inexplicable.

Why do you, a stranger, interest yourself in the affairs of the late Mr. Pendragon ? "

" Only because I have met his son, and have talked with him."

Adam Chignoweth was quite at his ease now ; he even went so far as to take a well-used pipe from his pocket, fill it with tobacco and hold a burning match to it with steady fingers.

" Were you intimate with young Roger Pendragon ? " he asked.

" Not what you might call intimate," replied Gwithian.

" Intimate enough for him to mention his late father's will ? "

" He certainly did mention it."

" Yes, I dare say he would ; he naturally would." And a curious smile passed over Adam Chignoweth's face. " Did he send you to me ? " he went on. " But of course he didn't—he was killed in the war."

" Was he killed ? " asked Gwithian.

" Of course he was. I saw the notice in the papers myself."

" The report I saw was that he was wounded and missing. There have been many curious cases of missing men turning up months later."

" Has he turned up ? " asked Adam Chignoweth quickly. " Have you heard that he has ? "

" My chances of learning about him have been very slight," replied Gwithian. " Soon after the war was over I went to Africa and remained there for two years ; I have only just returned. I heard a rumour that he had returned to England ; a rumour which has come to me rather curiously. If he is alive, I am going to find him. Moreover, if he's alive he will doubtless take steps to see whether his suspicions are not correct. If his story is true, both he and his sister were very badly treated."

" And do you believe his story ? "

" I don't know what to believe."

" I should like to know, for upon my word, sir, you have aroused my curiosity. As you say, I was Mr. Trefry's confidential clerk, and as Mr. Trefry was legal adviser of the Pendragon family, he naturally drew up the will. I was also one of the witnesses to the late Mr. Pendragon's signature, and was therefore closely associated with it. What cock-and-bull story did he tell you ? "

" As far as I can remember, it was this," replied Gwithian. " His father had told both him and his sister that he had left the family mansion and the great bulk of his property to them, and only an annuity to his widow. Whereas, I gather that, according to the will, Roger Pendragon did not leave a penny-piece to his own children ; did not even mention them."

"That is what he told you, is it?"

"That is what I gathered from him, anyhow."

"By the way, although I have asked for it twice, I do not know your name even yet," remarked Adam Chignoweth.

"My name will mean nothing to you," replied Gwithian, "even although it has Cornish associations. Rosewarne is not an uncommon name, is it?"

"And you are called Rosewarne?"

"Yes," replied Gwithian. As it happened, he had a right to it. Rosewarne was his mother's maiden name, and it had been given to him, as well as Gwithian, at his baptism.

"Well then, Mr. Rosewarne, let me tell you this. That will was dictated after the most painful heartsearching on the part of the late Mr. Pendragon. Those two children had been a thorn in his side for a considerable time. Their behaviour to their stepmother was of such a nature that he was obliged to send them away from home. They called her the most opprobrious names, they attributed to her the most evil of motives, they openly insulted her, not once but many times. Again and again their father threatened them that if they did not treat their stepmother decently he should be obliged to punish them. Then, even when the deceased gentleman was lying on a bed of sickness which proved to be his death-bed, they wrote him a letter which so insulted his wife that he determined to disinherit them. That was why when Mr. Trefry was sent for he had to prepare the will which you have heard about. I know this, because Mr. Trefry and myself talked the matter over together. It was a great grief to him and to all concerned."

"Did I not hear something about Mr. Trefry having a stroke, and of his apparent uncertainty at the time of reading the will?" asked Gwithian.

"Mr. Trefry's faculties were perhaps not too clear at the time," he replied; "and I know he was so affected at the thought of the children being left penniless that he might have acted rather strangely. But there is no doubt about the will being the expression of Mr. Pendragon's desires; not the slightest."

Adam Chignoweth had cast aside his reserve now and spoke freely and frankly. He seemed more at ease, too, and met Gwithian's inquiring glances with perfect naturalness. And yet the young man was not altogether satisfied. It was true that if anyone was in a position to know the facts this man was; and yet he could not square his statements with what Doctor Borlase had told him. It was while he was on his

death-bed that he had told the doctor that he had made a will leaving the bulk of his property to his children. How then could the other story be true?—or had the alleged letter from his children come later? He must see the doctor again and inquire more closely concerning this. But he showed no signs of suspicion to Adam Chignoweth; on the other hand he appeared to accept his every word as gospel.

"Did you say young Pendragon mentioned his sister to you?" asked Adam Chignoweth after a short silence.

"Yes, he did," replied Gwithian; "but I heard some time ago that she was married, and was living in Scotland."

"I hope it's so. Of course, I do not wish the young people any harm. In a sense it's very sad that their father should have turned against them as he did, although remembering everything, it was no wonder. Still, I hope she married well and is happy. And I hope, too, that if the rumour you heard is true, and young Pendragon is in England, he also will do well."

"I am sure you do," replied Gwithian. "Tell me," he added, "did the second Mrs. Pendragon like her husband's children? Did she treat them kindly?"

This time Gwithian could not be mistaken. A mocking smile came on Adam Chignoweth's lips: a smile which could only mean a kind of derision.

"I am afraid I know little of the family," he replied presently. "You see, I was only a clerk to the family lawyer; but as far as I can gather, her love for those children was exceptional, quite exceptional."

"Then isn't it a wonder that she didn't intercede for them, try to do something for them?" Gwithian asked.

"Ah, I know nothing about that, sir. Of course, my position in life takes me away from those who hold such exalted stations as that of Mrs. Pendragon. For that matter, I have neither seen nor heard from the lady since I left that part of the county, something like nine years ago."

CHAPTER XIV

CORROBORATIVE EVIDENCE

GWITHIAN kept a perfect control over his features as Mr. Adam Chignoweth made this statement. Neither by word nor look did he express a doubt concerning the truth of what the man had told him, and shortly afterwards when he left it was to thank him for speaking so freely. As he made

his way down the hill toward the Hotel Garage, however, he felt like laughing aloud.

During the early part of the interview, Mr. Adam Chignoweth had puzzled him ; afterwards he had for a time almost convinced him that he was telling the truth. He had spoken with such an air of assurance, and utter simplicity that, but for what Doctor Borlase had told him, it would be almost impossible to doubt him. He had the manner of one telling the truth. Perhaps his stern and almost dignified look strengthened this impression. He had all the air of one who in the past had been a trusted servant of the respected legal adviser to a number of landed gentry, and he appeared to be weighing every word carefully as if afraid of giving a wrong impression. Gwithian could fancy him growing indignant at anything like loose statements, and of being meticulous about adhering to the very letter of the truth. So much so was this the case that, but for his last statement, Gwithian would have left him with the idea that although there was much to puzzle him, Adam Chignoweth had told him only what he believed to be the truth.

"He was lying all the way through," he reflected; "lying in every word he uttered. Just fancy him saying that he had never heard from her for years, while this very morning he must have had a letter from her. Why, I saw it myself; stamped and sealed ready for postage."

A few minutes later Gwithian Trewithen was climbing the steep hill which leads out of the little town of Fowey, but he drove altogether by instinct. He did not know in the least where he was going, and when presently he came to a four cross-ways, he did not know of any reason why he took the road he did. At the back of his mind he had an idea that he was making for Bodmin, and that was all.

It was the lie which Adam Chignoweth had told him that altered his whole outlook, and aroused a thousand suspicions to which he had hitherto been a stranger.

He had learnt nothing, and yet he felt that his visit to Fowey had been laden with destiny. Again and again he went over the interview, went over it sentence by sentence. He remembered every look on his face, every flash of his eyes. At first, while he was respectful, his manner had been that of a man who was suspicious, and at times a little truculent. Why was that?

A perfectly innocent man would not be suspicious, would not watch him so narrowly, would not be so eager to know his reasons for asking questions.

He was sure that Adam Chignoweth feared something. What it was he did not know, but he felt certain that a constant fear was gnawing at his heart.

That was why he had told that gratuitous lie with which their interview had closed.

For it was a lie. Mrs. Pendragon's letter to him lay at the top of a heap of others ready to be posted. He would have received it that very morning. And yet he had gone out of his way to say that he had neither seen nor heard from Mrs. Pendragon for ten years. It was the sight of that letter, and the wonder which it aroused, which caused him to go to Fowey.

The rest of the interview counted as nothing compared with that one sentence, and that one sentence was a palpable gratuitous lie.

The car dashed up hill and down dale, through narrow, crooked lanes, and by lonely farmsteads; but Gwithian took no notice. A kind of detective fever was upon him; a determination to solve the mystery filled his heart.

Presently, after climbing a steep rugged hill, he found himself on the Goss Moors. Everywhere before him for many miles the country was bleak and desolate; nowhere in the whole of England could there be found a more barren and more unlovely spot than this. The car dashed along the straight level road like a streak of lightning. There was nothing to impede its progress, and the high-powered engine ate up the miles as if by magic.

He stopped suddenly. Why he did so he did not know, but he took his foot from the accelerator and jammed down the brake. On his right hand were miles of desolation, on his left he saw Roche Rock lifting its head to the sky, while near by were huge mountains of debris which had been thrown up from the clay-pits.

What connection these things had with the problem in his mind he did not know, but suddenly his thoughts took shape, his suspicions became convictions.

This was how it came to him. While Adam Chignoweth had been clerk to Mr. Trefry, he had, as Doctor Borlase had said, been as poor as a church mouse; it was with difficulty that he had been able to rear his family. Then directly Mr. Trefry had died he had become an affluent man. He had gone to Fowey and bought a well-appointed comfortable house; he had lived in comfort for years. Where did he get the money?

Mrs. Pendragon had given it to him.

Again he went over the circumstances of the will. According to Doctor Borlase, Roger Pendragon had told him that he had

made a will leaving practically everything to his children, yet on the day of the funeral at the reading of the will, the children had nothing, their names were not even mentioned.

How did that come about?

While Mr. Trefry was reading the will he had been startled, bewildered; did not seem to know what he was doing. Evidently its contents were strange to him.

Who had benefited by the will which was read? Mrs. Pendragon, instead of having only an annuity, was complete possessor of the deceased man's fortune.

Was not a false will produced to take the place of the true one?

That would explain the whole situation. All the contradictions and anomalies would cease to be contradictions and anomalies in the light of that fact. By some means or other Adam Chignoweth had replaced the true will by a false one, and that false will had been inspired and dictated by Mrs. Pendragon.

It seemed altogether unbelievable; and yet it *might* be true. Adam Chignoweth had been for many years confidential clerk to Mr. Trefry. He knew his signature and was able to forge it; doubtless he had engrossed the false will and placed it in his employer's safe.

Of course it was a dangerous thing to do, but Adam Chignoweth knew his master's idiosyncrasies, knew his mental condition—no man better. Mr. Trefry had lately had a stroke which had dulled his faculties, weakened his intellect, impaired his memory, and made him an easy prey to the schemes of this man and this woman.

It was a *criminal* thing to do. If discovered it might mean imprisonment for life; at any rate, it would mean heavy punishment. But a big risk must be taken if big things were to be accomplished.

A French King who was a Protestant, once said that the throne of France was worth a Mass. So he violated his conscience.

Might not Mrs. Pendragon say that Pendragon was worth a big risk? Might not Adam Chignoweth say that a large sum of money down and an income of perhaps a thousand a year was worth the perjury of his soul?

And he, Gwithian, would never have thought of this, but for the gratuitous lie which Adam Chignoweth had told him that very day.

But he could prove nothing. The surmises he had just made might be convictions to him, but they were only surmises. Nothing could be done.

Again he went over the whole situation. Roger Pendragon was dead, had been dead ten years. Mrs. Pendragon was in possession of the Pendragon estates, and according to the will, which had been duly proved, was the possessor of all that gentleman had left behind. Her position was assured; she was as safe as Gibraltar. Meanwhile Karenza Pendragon and her half-mad brother were homeless, and friendless, and hopeless.

That was the position, and as far as he could see that position was unalterable. Besides, were not all his fancies as baseless as the fabric of a dream? If wrong had been done—and he believed wrong had been done—it was unalterable.

Almost instinctively he put the car into gear and pressed the accelerator. The perfectly poised engine took up its burden and swept on. He passed through Fraddon, Indian Queen's, Blue Anchor, down the lovely valley towards Ladock, and then made his way towards Tresillian.

He would forget the whole day's experiences, and he would no longer trouble his head about things in which he had no concern! Of course, the condition of Karenza Pendragon and her brother was pitiful enough, and he would gladly help them in case of need. Indeed, he began to think how he might render assistance to them. But as for subversing the present condition of affairs, it was absurd, absolutely impossible; and when he reached Cromlech Cottage again, he felt that he had been another Don Quixote tilting against wind-mills.

"Have you had tea, sir?" Cradock greeted him.

"No, Cradock. Upon my word I forgot all about it."

"Shall I get you some, sir? It wants less than an hour to dinner-time."

"Then we won't trouble about it."

"Very good, sir. I hope you have had a pleasant day, Mr. Gwithian."

"I have been for a glorious ride, Cradock, and seen some wonderful country. By the way, has anyone called?"

"No one in particular, sir. A servant from the Hall brought you a letter. I placed it on the mantelpiece in the living-room."

He opened the letter and read as follows:

"Dear Mr. Trewithen,—

"The young people have arranged a little tennis party on Saturday afternoon, and they are both very anxious for you to join them. I need scarcely say that I shall be glad if you can find it convenient to do this. Would you also stay

to dinner? We all hope you will. Marjorie rose with a headache this morning and looked rather pale, but I am glad to say she is all right now. Hoping to see you on Saturday, and with all kindest regards,

"ANNA PENDRAGON."

"That's very kind of Mrs. Pendragon," Gwithian reflected, "and of course I'd like to go. I will write a note at once."

But the letter he intended to write was never written. Why it was he did not understand, but there was a revulsion of feeling in his heart. If what he believed was true, could he accept Mrs. Pendragon's hospitality? Could he sit at her table and——

He wondered whether Adam Chignoweth would communicate with her, tell her what had happened that day. If his suspicions were correct, both he and the woman would attach sinister motives to the most seemingly innocent happenings. Would Adam Chignoweth write describing the kind of man his visitor was, and would she by any means be led to identify him as that visitor? Had he not done foolishly in giving his second name, instead of the name by which he was generally known? He almost wished he hadn't gone to Fowey at all. Anyhow, he would not reply to her invitation then. It could easily stand over until the next day.

He went outside the cottage door and looked around him. A little way down, less than a quarter of a mile, a little stream ran, by which a great rock stood. Away beyond the stream were the Pendragon woods. Yes, the countryside was very fair and had no suggestion of tragedy; and yet he felt as though tragedy were in the air. He called to mind his first night's experiences—of what he had seen and heard. Never since the night on which he and Roger Pendragon had struggled together had he seen the brother and sister. No sign nor word from them had come to him, and even Cradock had begun to think he had been mistaken. What was the meaning of it? He went back to the house, had a bath and then dressed for dinner. Hours later Cromlech Cottage lay bathed in moonlight while the silence of the night brooded over it.

Gwithian did not go to bed; he felt he could not; he was too restless, his nerves were too much on edge. At ten o'clock Cradock had gone to bed, after coming to him, as was his custom, to ask if he could do anything further for him. After this Gwithian had gone out for a walk. He had started with the intention of going to Pendragon Village and calling on Doctor

Borlase, but he had scarcely reached the Pendragon gates when he gave up the idea. Somehow he could not discuss, even with the doctor, his experiences of the day. The thoughts which had come to him were too fantastic, too absurd to be talked about. But he could not drive them out of his mind; they haunted him, persistently haunted him.

It was nearly midnight when at length he returned to the house. He was very tired, but he could not rest. He opened book after book and tried to read, but nothing held his attention. Presently he started up suddenly; he heard the sound of footsteps.

His mind flashed back to the night on which he had come. He had then heard footsteps which were immediately followed by the sight of that strange lonely figure which had haunted him ever since. With strained ears and tense nerves he sat still and listened, then his heart gave a sudden leap.

There was a gentle tapping at the window; so gentle that if he had not been listening intently he could not have heard it. Quickly but silently he made his way to the door and opened it. There, standing by the window, was the lonely figure he had seen weeks before.

"Miss Karenza," he said, going toward her.

"Is that you, Mr. Trewithen?" she asked. "Are you alone? Is your servant asleep?"

She was evidently much wrought upon. She spoke in whispers and seemed afraid.

"Yes, I am quite alone," he replied, "and Cradock has been in bed for hours. What can I do for you?"

"Roger is near by," she replied. "I wanted to come alone, but he would not let me."

"Why did you want to come alone? It's past midnight."

"I wanted to tell you something. It may be only a little thing, but you promised to help me and this may be important."

"You must come in," replied Gwithian. "I will go and fetch your brother."

"No, don't fetch him! I do not want him to hear! Besides, it pleases him to think he's guarding me, and he's only just outside the gate."

"Anyhow, come in," he said, and he drew her gently toward the door. "There, sit down in that arm-chair. Don't be afraid; there is nothing to fear."

She was looking better than when he had seen her last. Colour had come into her cheeks and there were stars in her eyes. It might seem as though something had given her hope.

"You promised to help me," she said; "I shouldn't have come but for that. For a long time I didn't know what to do; how to make use of my discovery; then I thought of you."

"I am glad you did," he replied. "I will do anything in my power to help you."

"Are you sure?" she asked.

"Of course I am. I told you I would, didn't I?"

"Yes, but I was afraid you had changed your mind."

"Why should I change my mind?"

The girl hesitated a second and then went on: "Of course, it may be only foolish gossip, but people are saying at the mine that the gentleman who lives at Cromlech Cottage is engaged to Miss Trounce. I should have come here before but for that. Are you engaged to her? You must forgive me for asking, but I couldn't tell you what I have found out if you are."

"Why shouldn't you?"

"Because—— Surely I needn't answer that?"

"No, you need not answer that," he replied, divining what was in her mind.

"I think we hated each other as children," she went on. "How could we help it? I suppose she knew nothing of what her mother was trying to do, and I hear she's a kind-hearted girl, but—— Oh, surely you can understand. Did my father intend *her* to live at Pendragon while I, his child, worked at the mine? No, no, Mr. Trewithen, you can't believe that!"

"Anyhow," replied Gwithian, "you may speak freely. I am not engaged to her."

The girl looked at him scrutinizingly as if she still doubted him. Presently she said, like one speaking to herself than to him:

"Yes, I can trust you; you are a good man; you will not betray me."

"Of course I will not betray you," was his rejoinder. "Whatever you tell me will be held sacred."

"It may not be much," and she looked at him piteously, "but I fasten on any straw which I think holds out a promise. When I was here last it was mentioned that Adam Chignoweth witnessed the will."

Gwithian could not help starting. That she should mention the name of the man whom he had visited that day, and who had been in his mind ever since, seemed more than a coincidence.

"Yes, that is so," he replied, wondering what was in her mind.

"In thinking it over since, I remembered that it was said of him that he was Mr. Trefry's right-hand man, that he knew

as much about his business as Mr. Trefry knew himself; that was why I was so startled."

"Startled? What has startled you?"

"It was this way. Nearly a week ago I had occasion to go to St. Elizabeth Station. I had written to Plymouth for something and had arranged for it to be sent there."

"For Miss Karenza Pendragon?"

"Oh no," and the girl smiled wanly; "Miss Karenza Pendragon is not known in St. Elizabeth. The parcel was addressed to Jane Smith. I expected it by the last train, which arrives just before ten o'clock, so I went on the platform to meet it. When it arrived I saw the three passengers who alighted. One of them got out of a carriage close to where I stood. The moment I saw him I recognized him; it was Mr. Adam Chignoweth."

"Yes?" queried Gwithian eagerly. He had become deeply interested in the girl's narrative.

"He was but little changed from when I knew him as a child, and I had no difficulty in recognizing him. In a moment I remembered that he was one of the signatories of the will, and I was on the point of speaking to him."

"But you didn't?" queried Gwithian excitedly.

"No, I didn't; something seemed to stop me from doing that. I felt—I don't know why—that it would be wrong. I began to wonder about him instead. I had heard that he had gone somewhere up the county to live, and I asked myself what he was doing at St. Elizabeth. Of course, he didn't know me. I was only a child when he had seen me last."

"And then?" asked Gwithian; "what did you do?"

"I made up my mind that I would follow him," replied the girl. "Why I did it I don't know; but I did. It was dark by this time, and I had no difficulty in keeping him in sight without his knowing. He went in the direction of the village of Pendragon; but he didn't go through the village. He turned down a lane, called Trewalzick Lane, and kept along it for nearly half a mile."

"And you followed him?"

"Yes, I followed him. A mad fancy possessed me by this time, and I wouldn't have let him out of my sight for anything. After a while he turned up another lane which led to the Pendragon lodge gates. When he got there he appeared very anxious; he stopped and looked around him and seemed to be listening intently; then he noiselessly opened the gate and went up the drive."

"And you?—what did you do?"

"I followed him, followed him till he reached the house."

"And that, you say, was a week ago?"

"A week to-morrow. To-day is Wednesday, this happened last Thursday."

"Well, get on with your story. What happened then?" He was impatient for her to continue.

"I am afraid nothing more happened, at least of any importance. It seemed as though he were expected, for although it was now eleven o'clock, and the house was in darkness, no sooner did he reach the door than it opened."

"Did you see who opened it?"

"Yes, it was that woman. I had difficulty in keeping myself from crying out when I saw her, but I didn't make a sound. I saw her hold the door while he passed in; then it closed again, leaving me outside."

"And you are sure it was Adam Chignoweth?"

"As sure as that you are you. I saw him plainly in the light of the lamp at the station. I saw him again plainly in the light in the hall at Pendragon. I am sure it was he."

"Is that all you have to tell me?"

"That is all. I know it seems very little; it may mean nothing at all, but perhaps you can understand why I wanted to tell you—why——"

"Yes, yes, I understand," he interrupted her almost impatiently. "Will you please be quiet a minute. I want to think."

Perhaps if she had come to him the night before and told him all this he would have thought nothing of it. It might easily have meant nothing; but now it stood out before him with startling bewilderment.

Adam Chignoweth had told him that very day, that he had neither seen nor heard anything of Mrs. Pendragon for ten years. Remembering the letter he had seen addressed to him he had put it down as a gratuitous lie. Afterwards he had asked himself whether it might not be explained by the fact that Mrs. Pendragon had not posted the letter. But here was another proof, an irrefragable proof that the man had lied. Mrs. Pendragon had not only written, but had received him in her own house within the last week.

What was the meaning of it?

"What inference do you draw from it?" he asked at length.

"I hardly dare to tell you," she replied. "I am only an ignorant girl and I am afraid to think what it may mean; but,

as I told you, I am constantly fastening upon every straw of evidence that may seem like proof of what I believe."

"What do you believe?" he asked.

"Can't you see? The will that was read that day was not my father's will. He never dictated it; had no part in it. He couldn't, Mr. Trewithen. I have thought it all over hundreds of times and I am sure. Do you think my father would tell me a lie? Do you imagine that after his telling me that he had drawn up a will leaving everything to Roger and me he could have done that? No, no, the will that was read that day was not my father's will."

"Then what *do* you believe?" he persisted.

"That there is a guilty secret between that man and that woman. Else why should he come at night? Why should he make his way to the house like a thief in the night? Why should that woman receive him after all the family had gone to bed? Don't you see," and her eyes shone with almost unnatural brightness, "that explains why Mr. Trefry looked so strange when he read the will. It wasn't the will he had drawn up at all, it was a false will. He was afraid to declare the truth; afraid lest people should think his memory impaired, his faculties weakened. Oh, I have thought of it again and again, until I felt I was going mad. But for the fact of my being sure that my father would never do such a thing I should have given up long ago. But I *was* sure; I *am* sure. I have spent hours wondering what explanations there could be—who drew up the will that was read, until everything seemed to point to Adam Chignoweth."

Gwithian was startled at the similarity between his own thoughts and those of the girl. Without knowing what was in each other's minds they had been led to the same conclusion.

"Tell me this," he said after a long silence, "where were you at the time of your father's last illness?"

"At school."

"Did anyone inform you that he was ill?"

"Yes; that woman wrote to us explaining that our father was ill in bed. She did not say how ill."

"And did you write your father?"

"Of course I did. Both Roger and I sent him a letter."

"What kind of letter? Forgive me for asking this, but I want to know. Did you in your letter mention Mrs. Pendragon's name? Did you say anything wrong about her? Did you mention anything about her having treated you unkindly?"

"Why no, of course not. We both of us sent a loving letter telling him how sorry we were that he was so ill, and hoping that he would soon be better again."

"And that was all?"

"Yes, that was all."

"You are certain of this? I've a reason for asking."

"Of course I'm certain of it."

Here was another lie which Adam Chignoweth had told him, a lie almost as gratuitous as the other. Why should he do this except——

"I know I ought not to have bothered you about my troubles," pleaded the girl, "but you were so kind to us when we were here last that I could scarcely help myself. Besides, I have no one to help me,—you know what Roger is,—and—and—— Can you help me? Will you?"

She laid her hand upon his arm as she spoke, and looked into his eyes. His answer came before he realized that the words had passed his lips.

"I will do everything in my power to help you," he replied, and there was eagerness in his voice. He felt the nerves in his arm tingling, felt a strange glow in his heart as he caught the stars in the girl's eyes.

"And do you think there is anything in my fancies? Do you believe that the will read that day was my father's will?"

Again his answer came before he knew he had spoken.

"No, I do not!" He spoke impatiently, as though he was angry with himself for having so far betrayed his thoughts.

"And do you think I was right in following Adam Chignoweth?"

"I am sure you were."

"And do you believe that—that——?" She did not conclude the sentence; she seemed afraid to utter the words which had come into her mind.

Should he tell her of what had passed between himself and Adam Chignoweth that day? Of the thoughts that had flashed into his mind as he sat alone in his car there on the wild waste of the Goss Moors? No, it was better not. He was afraid to arouse hopes which might be never fulfilled, probably never *could* be fulfilled. The task he had set himself was as hopeless as the task of scooping Dosmary Pool dry, which, according to Cornish legends, was given to Tregeagle, the mythical personage of the West.

"I am so glad you have promised to help me," she said wist-

fully. "I had made up my mind to do everything by myself; but I am so helpless. And you are so good to me, so patient. Do you think there is any hope?"

He shook his head. "I see no grounds for hope."

"I do," she replied.

"Where is it?" And he spoke a little angrily. "What chances have you? I don't want to dishearten you, but one must face facts. If there is another will, where is it? How can we find it? Mrs. Pendragon is a rich woman and has everything. You are poor, you have nothing. Even although you have right on your side you can't do anything."

"Yes, I can."

"What can you do?"

"I can at least believe in God," she replied.

"God? What's God to do with it?"

"Don't you believe in God?"

"I'd better not trouble you with my theology," was his answer. "Doubtless there is,—there *must* be a Creator of everything; but He doesn't trouble Himself about such things as this."

"Oh yes, He does," she replied simply; "He must. That is why I cannot give up hope. God is a God of Truth and He cannot allow a lie to live on."

"It seems to me that He has," replied Gwithian cynically.

"No, that cannot be; it is impossible. I have come to believe that God led you here; that God has made you willing to help me. That is why I am ever so much happier, more hopeful."

There was a new light in the girl's eyes; a look of simple trusting faith which he had not seen before. It illuminated her face and, in spite of her apparent helplessness, made her beautiful.

"Good night," she said. "I must be going now."

"Let me give you some refreshment before you go. I am sure you must be tired and faint after your long walk."

"No, thank you. I do not require anything."

He thought of the determination he had made earlier in the day, remembered that as a mine girl she would be earning only a few shillings a week, and wondered if he could not offer her some financial help.

"I have thought a great deal about you since I saw you last; remembered that your brother must be a heavy burden upon you. Will you not allow me to take some of your burden from you?"

He was sorry he had spoken ; sorry as soon as he had spoken the words. She drew herself up proudly, haughtily.

"I think I told you some time ago that my brother was not a burden, Mr. Trewithen," she replied ; "I am grateful to you for your kind thoughts, but Roger is my care. Good night."

"Won't you allow me to accompany you home ? " he persisted.

"Roger is outside," she made answer, "and we shall not be lonely." Then a tender tone came to her voice.

"Thank you for being so good, so kind, so patient."

She pressed his hand as she spoke and again Gwithian saw the stars in her eyes.

Without another word he walked with her down the garden path and a few yards along the lane, until both saw a dark form emerge from behind a thorn-bush.

"Karenza ? "

"Yes, Roger ? "

"Is all well ? "

"Yes, Roger, all is well."

The youth did not take any notice of Gwithian, even by a glance ; all his thoughts were for his sister.

"Come, then."

She took his arm and the two walked away together in the silence of the night while Gwithian stood gazing after them.

What was going to happen he did not know. How he could help this lonely young couple he did not dream, but he felt in his heart of hearts that something was going to happen, something unheard of, and as he entered the house he was afraid.

CHAPTER XV

WAS IT A DREAM OR—— ?

SCARCELY was Gwithian Trewithen's head laid upon the pillow than he fell asleep. He had had a hard, tiring day. He had driven something like a hundred miles, and he had had two exciting interviews. Added to that his mind had been more than ordinarily perturbed. Little wonder then that sleep came quickly. How long he slept he did not know ; it might not have been more than a few minutes ; it might have been hours. Had you asked him closely as to what took place on his awakening I imagine that he could not have given you a very coherent account. For that matter, I doubt whether he was sure that he had awakened. What comes to one in the

middle of the night, or in the early hours of the morning, are generally confused, abnormal. The life-blood flows slowly, vitality is at its lowest ebb, and one's imaginings are often sombre and incoherent.

Be that as it may, Gwithian was convinced that he had awakened. Why he had awakened he did not know; the room was nearly dark, and the silence of the night brooded over Cromlech Cottage.

He felt as though there was something eerie, unearthly, in the room. He was not afraid; indeed, no thought of fear entered his mind, but he felt as though there was something uncanny, something outside the ordinary range of his experiences pervading the atmosphere. The only ray of light in the apartment was a moonbeam which shone through the window obliquely and illumined one corner. The rest of the room was in darkness. But it was summer darkness, and he was able to distinguish certain articles of furniture.

Not a sound broke the silence, not a whisper even of the wind among the trees; and yet he felt that something, he knew not what, was near him.

Presently he thought he saw something like a glow at the foot of the bed. Not as bright as the moonbeam which illumined a part of the room, but brighter than that end where the bed stood. Slowly the glow took shape. At first the shape was almost indistinguishable, but as the seconds passed by, it became more and more clearly outlined.

Why it was he could not tell, but he caught himself repeating words which for years he had not thought of.

"*There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.*"

"Why should I think of those words?" he asked himself. He had no thought nor knowledge; but they abode in his memory. He knew that they were written in the First Letter which St. Paul had sent to the Corinthians. He had not read the New Testament for years,—not since he was a schoolboy in fact,—but the words kept on persisting in his memory.

"*There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.*"

All the time the figure at the foot of the bed became more and more clearly outlined.

It was the form of a man dressed in a white gown; it looked like a shroud. At first he could see no features, but presently these too became more clearly visible. A few seconds later the figure looked more substantial, more corporeal. It might have been a living man who stood there.

He lay looking at the figure without sound or motion. He did not try to speak; he did not want to. He just lay and watched.

Presently the figure turned its face towards him, and he saw who it was. He was neither frightened nor surprised, rather he expected what he saw. It was the face of Roger Pendragon, the face he had sketched after his previous dream, the face he had seen in the picture at Pendragon Hall.

Presently the figure moved. He saw the right arm slowly uplifted with the forefinger outstretched; then the arm bent and the forefinger pointed to something under the left arm. What this was he could not see, but it looked to him like a roll of paper.

Then the arm of the figure dropped to its side again.

Three times this action was repeated; three times the arm was uplifted; three times the forefinger pointed to something under the left arm, and then drop by its side.

At length he found himself speaking.

"Who are you? What do you want?" he whispered.

But there was no answer except, as it seemed to him, the eyes of the figure looked pleadingly toward him.

Then slowly it faded away. That which had been plainly visible became more and more indistinct until only the glow remained, which in its turn passed away.

"Am I asleep or am I awake?" he asked himself. "Am I dreaming or is something really happening? Anyhow, it's very strange."

But he did not fear, he was not even excited; to him there was nothing to be excited about, and yet it was all very wonderful.

His faculties became dimmer and dimmer until presently he was scarcely conscious where he was. Then he became oblivious to everything.

When he awoke the sunshine was streaming into his room. The songs of the birds who were carolling gaily on the tree-tops reached him, the pleasant sound of bees humming in the garden outside made him feel the spirit of summer-time.

For some time he lay in a half-dreamy condition, no remembrance of anything came to him. Life was pleasant, and that was all.

Then suddenly the past came to him;—his previous day's journey, his talk with Adam Chignoweth, the visit of Karenza Pendragon, followed by his wonderful dream.

Was it a dream? If it were a dream it was the most vivid one he had ever known. Every detail of his experiences came

back to him and was boldly outlined in his memory. Lying there in bed he visualized what had happened. He saw the moon's ray streaming through the window, illumining a corner of the apartment; saw the strange figure at the end of the bed which became more and more clear; saw the face which had appealed to him so strongly; saw the right hand with finger outstretched lifted again and again; saw the arm bend and point to something under the left arm.

No, this was like no dream that he had ever known. There was nothing dim or indistinct about anything; all was clearly outlined and vivid; it was as real to him as his conversation with Karenza was real.

What did it mean? Why had these experiences come to him?

Gwithian Trewithen was not what might be called an imaginative man. None of his early associations, or his education, tended in that direction. For poetry he had little or no love, and although he enjoyed reading a good novel he always cast aside those wherein the author's imagination outran his judgment. He always wanted his feet to rest on fact; he was a scientist, a searcher for scientific truth. What had a mining engineer to do with flights of imagination?

He tried to explain what had come to him, for he felt there was an explanation. Although it did not seem like a dream he assumed that it was a dream. Well, what were dreams? The best explanation that he had come across was that they were the repetition of things which had really happened in waking hours; that something in the brain recorded facts which had actually taken place, and repeated them, oft-times in a very vague and uncertain way, during the time the possessor of the brain was asleep.

But this was not altogether satisfactory. For example, he had dreamt of a face which he had never seen in life, and under the influence of his dream he had sketched that face, only to find later that it was a portrait of Roger Pendragon. No law of which he knew anything could explain that.

It was true that throughout the previous day the story of Roger Pendragon had been uppermost in his mind. It was because of what the doctor had told him about the will that he had gone to see Adam Chignoweth. It was about the will that Karenza Pendragon had come to see him. Throughout the whole day his mind had been occupied with little else. Perhaps that might account for the strange apparition which had come to him in his sleeping hours.

But it did not satisfy him; there was some meaning behind it; something which was not within the realm of explanation.

He leapt out of bed, and a minute later plunged into the cold bath which Cradock had prepared for him.

"I must get this nonsense out of my head," he said to himself. "I am not in a normal condition. I must get my brain clear. . . ."

"Good morning, Cradock."

"Good morning, sir. I hope you've slept well?"

"Like a top. And you?"

"Very well, thank you, Mr. Gwithian."

"You haven't been troubled with any ghosts lately?"

"No, sir, nothing."

"We've had a bad effect upon our ghosts, Cradock," he laughed.

Cradock's face never moved a muscle.

"Susan Jory says she saw it last night," remarked Cradock solemnly.

"Saw a ghost last night? When? Where?"

"About one o'clock this morning, sir. She says she got out of bed, and on looking out of the window saw two ghostly figures pass by."

"How did she know they were ghostly?"

"There was no sound of footsteps, sir. They just glided along without making any noise."

Gwithian laughed.

"That's how these stories are manufactured," he reflected. "The woman saw Karenza Pendragon and her brother returning from here, and because it was late, and she heard no footsteps, she made sure they were ghosts."

"Anyhow, you weren't bothered?" he said aloud.

"No, sir. I wasn't bothered."

After breakfast Gwithian went out into the fields and revelled in the bright sunshine. He felt sane, light-hearted, free from morbid fancies. All he had experienced was because of some strange tricks of the brain which he was not going to bother about. Of course, he was interested in Karenza's story; but it was not for him to trouble about it; he would drive it from his mind.

In spite of his determination, however, his experiences haunted him. His promise to Karenza held him fast; the lies which Adam Chignoweth had told him persistently returned to his memory; and more than once he caught himself wondering what his dream, or whatever it was, meant.

"Hallo, Trewithen, is that you?"

It was the ringing tones of Doctor Borlase's voice that reached him. Turning, he saw the doctor's car in the lane near by, and he made his way toward it.

"You ought to be a happy man, Trewithen," the doctor greeted him, as he came up.

"Yes, why?"

"Anyone who is fancy free, care free, worry free, with health and strength, and plenty of money, ought to be happy."

"Find me the man who is all that."

"I should think his name is Gwithian Trewithen," and the doctor laughed as he pulled out his pipe. "By the way," he continued, "are you well?"

"Why?"

"Your eyes look a bit heavy. Didn't you sleep well?"

"Doctor," said Gwithian, "you are a man supposed to study the laws of health; you know a good deal about the human body. I suppose in your student days you spent the usual time in dissecting dead bodies?"

The doctor laughed for answer.

"Do you know anything about the laws of the mind?"

"Precious little," admitted the doctor; "no one does. Why do you ask?"

"Ever since I came into this neighbourhood," replied Gwithian, "one thing has been uppermost in my mind. It was almost the first thing that I heard about, and practically every experience I have had since I came here has gathered around it."

"What's that?"

"Roger Pendragon and his will. It's haunted me like a ghost. It's been a sort of nightmare to me, and I can't get rid of it. Wherever I go, or whatever I do, I am constantly brought back to it. Before I came here I had never heard of Roger Pendragon, but ever since I came he has haunted me."

The doctor became grave. "On the lines of what you told me the other night?" he queried.

"I didn't tell you everything, I can't do that even now," Gwithian replied. "Are you busy this morning?"

"Not too busy for a chat. What have you in your mind?"

"You remember telling me the first time we met about the reading of that will?"

"Perfectly."

"You told me, too, that Adam Chignoweth was one of the witnesses?"

"I did."

"That he had been Mr. Trefry's confidential clerk and right-hand man; that he knew practically everything about Mr. Trefry's affairs?"

"That's true."

"That all the time he worked for Mr. Trefry he was as poor as a church mouse, and that it was with difficulty that he reared his large family?"

The doctor nodded.

"Now, I want to tell you something which you mustn't repeat. When I was at Pendragon Hall some days ago I saw a letter addressed to Adam Chignoweth. It had been written by Mrs. Pendragon, and was stamped ready for the post. I don't know why it was, but the question haunted me as to why Mrs. Pendragon should write him. The night before last, as you remember, I came to your house and we had a long talk together; that talk fired my imagination more than ever, and unknown to you, I determined to go to Fowey."

"And you went?" asked the doctor excitedly.

"Yesterday. I found that he lived in a good house and was in easy circumstances. In fact, he is regarded in the town as what is called a substantial man."

"Has he had a windfall?" the doctor laughed.

"That is not all," and then Gwithian went on to tell him all that had taken place.

"Then the man lied to you?" exclaimed the doctor presently. "Deliberately lied to you."

"Gratuitously lied to me," persisted Gwithian. "Why should he? But wait. I can't tell you how the information came to me; I am not at liberty to do so; but I know that a week ago Adam Chignoweth paid a visit to Pendragon Hall. He got there just before midnight and was admitted to the house by Mrs. Pendragon herself."

The doctor gave a long whistle.

"Now I am going to tell you something else which I have laughed at myself for thinking about, but I can't drive it out of my mind." Thereupon he told the doctor of the dream, or whatever it was, that came to him.

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed the doctor. "And you say it was Roger Pendragon?"

"The face which I saw before, the face which I sketched. I looked at the sketch again this morning."

"What do you make of it?" asked the doctor presently.

"That's what I am asking you," replied Gwithian. "Mind, I have no preconceived notions; all that has come to me, has come to me in spite of myself. I have told you what I have actually seen and heard."

"But not all?" queried the doctor. "You said there are some things which you are not at liberty to tell me."

"That is true."

"On the lines of what you have told me?"

"In a sense, yes; and they go to confirm the rest."

The doctor sat in his car staring into vacancy. His pipe had gone out.

"Trewithen," he said suddenly, "do you believe that when a man dies that it's the end of him?"

"I haven't troubled much about it," replied Gwithian.

"I don't," replied the doctor. "In my callow student days I did; I suppose I was a blank materialist. I imagined I had a belief in a Supreme Being, but beyond that I had no faith. But I don't believe Roger Pendragon's dead."

"You mean——?"

"That that something which was the essential Roger Pendragon is still alive. The body died, but *he* still lives. I can't explain it, but ever since that day of the funeral I have known in my heart of hearts that he is alive. That the essential he, is,—where I don't know, in what condition I don't know,—but I have had the consciousness through all the years that my friend is alive. Now assume for the moment that this is true. Would he not want to be near his old associations, near the things he had loved on earth?—Oh! I am no spiritualist. I don't believe in spooks and table rapping, and planchette writing; but I believe that my old friend still lives and loves."

"Well, what then?"

"Look here, Trewithen; you know what I told you the first morning I saw you; you know what I told you about the reading of the will?"

"I remember."

"You are a stranger to the district and you can look at everything in a detached kind of way; you are not influenced by old associations or anything of that sort. I told you the story,—first hand as far as I knew it,—told it truly. Do you believe that the will which left everything to that woman, *and nothing to those children*, was Roger Pendragon's will?"

Gwithian was silent; he was afraid to tell the doctor what had come to him on the previous day.

"But nothing can alter facts," he protested at length. "If there is another will, where is it? Whether you are right or wrong, Mrs. Pendragon and her children are the owners of Pendragon Hall, and all that Roger Pendragon left."

"Yes, I know; but there is a great black lie somewhere. And what you've told me this morning confirms me in my belief that there *is* a great black lie."

"But what can be done?"

"Nothing. I can see that; nothing. We are up against a great blank wall. The will has been accepted as Roger Pendragon's. It has been proved; the estate has passed into his widow's hands, and she has administered it, and received a huge income ever since he died. No, nothing can be done."

"You told me," Gwithian said, after a long silence, "that the boy Roger Pendragon had been killed in the war, and that the girl Karenza had been married and was living in Scotland."

"Yes, I told you that. I wrote to the War Office about the boy, and the letter I got from the authorities practically established the news that he was dead. The story of the girl I saw in a local paper. It was an announcement of the fact that a Miss Pendragon was married to a Scotchman."

"You don't know that it was your friend's daughter, then? It might have been someone else bearing the same name."

"I must be going now" exclaimed the doctor suddenly; "but, by gad! you have given me something to think about, Trewithen."

"You attach importance to it, do you?"

"I don't know. I think if anything were to come of it, it would convince me that there is an Almighty Providence. It isn't often such things happen. But if God is God, why shouldn't they? Good-bye."

The doctor drove away at break-neck speed, while Gwithian walked slowly back to Cromlech Cottage.

Arriving there he saw Mrs. Pendragon's unanswered letter lying on the desk. The evening before he had felt that he could not accept the woman's hospitality; but seizing a pen he wrote telling her that he would be delighted to join the party of tennis players the following Saturday afternoon.

Nothing of note happened during the interval, and on Saturday Gwithian appeared in flannels eager for tennis. Marjorie Trounce greeted him with a great show of gladness.

"I was afraid you weren't coming," she told him.

"Why should you think that?" he asked.

"For one thing, your answer was delayed; and for another, when you left here the other day I thought I had offended you."

"You offended me?"

"Anyhow, I am glad you've come. And—you are to be my partner in the first set."

She looked up into his eyes as she spoke and the look caused his nerves to tingle.

A little later he had forgotten everything else in the gladness of the day. A number of young people had gathered, and the mingling of their voices and their merry laughter made gloomy imaginings impossible. Again Karenza Pendragon had slipped into the background of his life. If he thought of her at all it was as a pathetic figure, a poor helpless girl obsessed by the thought that she suffered a great wrong. But she was foolishly mistaken. Pooh! how could a false will be substituted for a true one? How could this gracious woman who moved among her guests, and gave a pleasant word to each, be guilty of such a crime? The thought was too absurd for serious entertainment!

Everything around him was attractive. The great park which spread itself around him was smiling in the sunlight. Aged oaks abounded, deer gambled on the grassy slopes. Away in the distance a lake nestled in the verdant wood. On the other side the great house stood. A fine old mansion which had stood there for generations. Its walls, granite built, were lichen covered. They had stood the storms of the centuries. They reminded him of the hills in the distance; firmly foundationed, solid, unharmed by the sweep of centuries. The Hall had belonged to the Pendragons hundreds of years before, and the Pendragons were among those who had taken a leading part in the destinies of the nation. The name went far back into dim history.

And he was an honoured guest there that day. He had been gladly welcomed by a fair girl, the only daughter of the owner. What had he to do with fanciful thoughts and absurd imaginings?

Gwithian was in great form that day. In his Oxford days he had been a Tennis Blue, and although he had had little practice during later years his old skill came back to him. Indeed, he carried practically everything before him. As for Marjorie, the other said she played like a demon, and whenever they played together, they won.

Gwithian could not help admiring her; she was so instinct with health and vitality. She was fair to look upon, too, as, clad in her light summer garments, she flitted around the lawn. What a wife she would make; how happy he could be with her!

It was only a few weeks since he had returned from Africa and learnt that Ursula Sowerby had jilted him. He had felt angry and embittered then ; but now he could laugh at his foolishness. What was this stock-broker's daughter to him ? Besides, he had learned to love his native county, and he desired nothing better than to spend his life in this peninsula which was surrounded by the finest coast scenery and the most glorious sea in the world. He could become a Member of Parliament for his county, and thus would fulfil his life's ambitions. He need not go to her empty-handed either. He was well off and could afford to buy an estate near by. And best of all, the girl was fond of him. There was no doubt about that ; she had shown her preference for him in a dozen ways, and to all appearances was delighted to be with him. Of course, she would not be heiress of Pendragon Hall. That would naturally go to Harold ; but she would be what might be called a good match, and well fitted to be a country gentleman's wife.

Tea was served on the lawn, over which Mrs. Pendragon graciously presided. Snowy napery covered the tables, trim-footed maids waited on them, while a dignified-looking butler who looked as though he might have been a Bishop, moved slowly in and out among the guests.

Young Charlie Tregenny, only son and heir of Sir Charles Tregenny, was there ; so was the Honourable George Fortescue of the Guards, who had motored thirty miles to be present. Altogether a fashionable crowd which regarded Mrs. Pendragon with an almost reverent air. Fancy her being a criminal ! It was sheer nonsense, the imaginings of a madman's brain !

And yet even although Karenza Pendragon had sunk into the background of Gwithian's life he could not dispel all thoughts of her.

More than once the memory of her sitting in Cromlech Cottage came to him.

" You will help me, won't you ? " she had pleaded. " You don't believe that the will which did not even mention our names is my father's will, do you ? "

Even amid those bright surroundings the girl's face haunted him ; her words came to him.

The day died ; the sun set behind the leafy trees, and Mrs. Pendragon reminded Gwithian that he had promised to stay to dinner.

" I want to have a chat with you before you leave," she said, and he wondered why she wished to speak to him. Then he went away with the others to prepare for dinner.

Gwithian watched her face closely during the late meal which had been prepared. It was free from all suggestion of care. She laughed gaily and entered as eagerly into the plans of the young people as though she were one of them. The more he looked and listened the more he was convinced that his suspicions were groundless. Possibly she had during her husband's lifetime done her best to persuade him to leave everything to her, but that she had been guilty of destroying the true will and replacing it by a false one, was utterly absurd. No woman could be as gay as she appeared, if she had such a weight upon her mind.

"I wonder what she wishes to speak to me about?" he asked himself, as he watched her.

One by one the guests departed amidst gay banter and talks of their next meeting. Gwithian, however, was a little disturbed as he watched and listened. He could not help seeing that young Charlie Tregenny was more than ordinarily interested in Marjorie. Throughout the afternoon he had constantly sought to be with her, and had, as he imagined, treated him, Gwithian, somewhat cavalierly. Could it be that the young fellow was in love with her, and was jealous?

It was evident, too, that Charlie Tregenny was a great favourite with Mrs. Pendragon. He had seen him talking earnestly with that lady, and felt sure that something of more than ordinary interest brought them together.

"You must look me up some day, Trewithen," said the Honourable George Fortescue to him as they shook hands. "Of course, you shoot?"

"I used to," he replied, "but of late years I have been practically out of the world."

"Then you must come as soon as the partridges are ready. We have some very good moorland and I can give you some good sport."

"It is awfully good of you. I shall be delighted. I will buy a gun straight away and get some practice."

He could not help noticing, however, that Tregenny, who lived very much nearer, did not give him a similar invitation, and that he scarcely spoke to him on leaving.

When they had all gone he saw that Mrs. Pendragon was standing by his side.

"You are not tired, are you?" she queried.

"Not a bit," was his reply.

"Then we will have that chat I spoke to you about," and she led the way to the room where he had seen the letter addressed to Adam Chignoweth.

CHAPTER XVI

GWITHIAN'S WOOING

"DO you like Charlie Tregenny?" Mrs. Pendragon asked him suddenly. They had been talking about things of no importance whatever, and Gwithian had begun to wonder at her reason for bringing him there alone.

"I haven't thought much about him," he replied. "He seems the ordinary product of Eton and Sandhurst."

"You are not impressed by him, then?"

"I don't know that I am," and he looked at her questioningly.

"You will think it strange that I should ask you," went on Mrs. Pendragon, moving her chair a little closer to his, "but to tell you the truth I am a little troubled about what I ought to do."

Again he looked at her questioningly. What had she in her mind?

"Of course I have many acquaintances; but I have very few friends," she volunteered after an awkward silence. "I don't think I am quick at making friends."

"I should have thought that you would have had hosts of them," was his rejoinder.

"No, I have not. Among all my friends I have none in whom I can confide. That is why I am speaking to you in this way."

He was more than a little astonished, and showed it in his face.

"Put it down to a woman's fancy," she laughed a little nervously; "but directly I saw you, I felt I could speak to you freely. You are not like most young men of my acquaintance. You are grave and thoughtful. Your life hasn't been an ordinary one, has it?"

"There has been nothing extraordinary about it," he replied.

"Won't you tell me about yourself? I will tell you why I ask presently."

"Gladly," he replied. "My mother died when I was very young. Being rather delicate as a child, I was left to the care of a tutor; however, I got strong presently, and then my father sent me to Harrow. From Harrow I went to Oxford; then I studied mining engineering and I suppose did fairly well. At the outbreak of the war my father died. He had never been a wealthy man, and I am afraid did not take too much care of what he had. That was why when the war was over I found myself, from a financial point of view, in low water. Then I got a job in Africa which, although it did not promise much

from a money point of view, was jolly interesting. However, I needn't go into that, except to say that by some curious twists of fortune I made a good deal of money out of it. You see, the company which had employed me chucked it. They said it was throwing good money after bad. But I believed in it, and ventured my all on my judgment. The affair turned out trumps and, as I told you, I did very well. A few weeks ago I came back to England. That's all," he added.

"You must have had a hard time in Africa?" she ventured.

"I suppose I did; for one thing I was ill a good deal of the time; for another it became all or nothing with me, and that kind of thing brings a fellow up on his beam ends."

"Anyhow, it seems to have made you more thoughtful than young men of your age usually are."

"Possibly it did," he replied.

"I feel sure of it; you look so stable, so trustworthy, that's why I am trusting you now. That's why I have asked you to tell me about yourself."

He waited for her to continue, wondering what was in her mind.

"It's about Charlie Tregenny," she went on; "he's in love with Marjorie."

Gwithian was silent.

"Of course, in many ways he would be a good match; he is heir to a baronetcy, and although his father, like many other landlords in these days, is very poor, he bears a good old name."

Still Gwithian was silent.

"Whether he is the man to whom I can entrust my only daughter is the question which troubles me. The fact that he has a title, and that his wife would be Lady Tregenny, does not influence me at all; the question that matters is, would my child be happy with him?"

"Does not that depend on whether she loves him?" asked Gwithian. His heart was beating rapidly as he spoke; the woman's questions were touching him more nearly than he imagined they could.

"I don't understand Marjorie," she answered, "and in this matter she has never confided in me. In many respects Marjorie is modern to the finger-tips, in others she is old-fashioned. For example, I am sure she would not marry the man I did not approve of; on the other hand, if I advised her to accept Charlie Tregenny's offer——"

"She would accept him," ventured Gwithian as he saw her hesitate.

"I do not quite say that; but it would have great influence with her. You have seen a good deal of Marjorie during the last few weeks, Mr. Trewithen, and with your quick perception you understand something of the kind of girl she is. It's true you have met Charlie Tregenny to-day for the first time, but I saw you watching him closely, and I am sure you were summing him up. Do you think she could be happy with him?—that she could love him?"

Gwithian's heart continued to beat rapidly; the woman's questions almost threw him off his guard. He felt like confessing the feeling which had come to him with regard to the girl; but something held him back. Besides, he felt it would be bad form to plead his own cause under such circumstances, strongly as he was tempted to do so. He saw that the woman's eyes were upon him, and he almost felt afraid.

"You know the Tregenny family, of course?" she went on.

"I am afraid I don't," he replied. "You see, I have lived practically the whole of my life out of Cornwall, although I am a Cornishman. Except for the time I spent at the School of Mines I have never lived in my native county."

"Then you know nothing of Cornish families?"

"Nothing at all. It may seem strange to you, but only since I have come here have I heard your name. I never knew there was a Pendragon family."

He was not sure, but it seemed to him that a new look came into the woman's eyes. It might be of relief; certainly her face seemed less strained.

"That's strange," she replied. "I should have thought it impossible for one bearing a good old Cornish name never to have heard of the Pendragons, which is perhaps one of the oldest families in the county."

"I never troubled about such things," was his answer. "You see, my line of life was different."

"But you are proud of your county. I think I have heard you say that Cornwall was the most fascinating part of the country."

"That's true, I *do* think so."

"And you have visited a great many places since you came?"

"Yes. You see, I am fond of motoring, and motors enable one to go to places which would otherwise be unreachable."

"Tell me where you have been."

He mentioned the names of several well-known places he had visited.

"Is that all?" she asked, and he felt that her eyes were fixed upon him scrutinizingly. "The places you have visited lie mainly on the northern side. What about the southern side? That in many respects is far finer, more wooded, more pleasant. You have not mentioned Looe, or Fowey, or Polperro, and they are among the quaintest spots in Cornwall."

His suspicions, which had nearly died, were roused again. What purpose had she in wanting to know where he had been? Why should she ask him all these questions? But his face revealed nothing of his thoughts; he was one of those men who are able to control their features.

"Then I must go to them," he said. "I hear that Polperro is one of the most fascinating places in the county, but up to now I have never seen it."

He thought she was about to question him further, but at that moment there was a noise outside the door, and a second later Marjorie Trounce rushed into the room.

"What are you two conspiring about?" laughed the girl. "Mr. Trewithen, I think it mean of you to go away like this."

The girl's coming broke the spell which the woman had cast upon him, and created a new one. Yes, she was a creature to be desired. Why should he not make an end of all danger in regard to Charlie Tregenny? Why should he not declare for himself? Surely the girl's eyes invited him.

But he did not. Something, he knew not what, placed a barrier between them. But he answered her pleasantly, and for the next few minutes she held all his interest.

"You are awfully heathenish, Mr. Trewithen," she laughed as he was preparing to leave.

"Why that compliment?" he said, smiling.

"You have never been to church since you came."

"Haven't I? How do you know?"

"Mr. Moss told me."

"Then he told you wrongly. I visited it in his company; went over every bit of it."

"But never once to a service. You ought to be ashamed."

"And how long since you were there?" he retorted. "I am told that the Pendragon pew is seldom occupied by the owner's daughter."

"It's an awful old pew," and the girl gave a mock shudder. "I feel that the spirits of all the ancient Pendragons are there when I go. Mother scolds me when I say this; but I do. You would feel them if you sat there."

"I'd love to," laughed Gwithian.

"Do you hear that, mother?" And she turned to Mrs. Pendragon, who stood close by them. "Mr. Trewithen says he would love to sit in our pew and feel the spirits of the old Pendragons around him. Do you believe it? You go nearly every Sunday, although how you can bear it I don't know."

"I will go to-morrow if you will go with me," Gwithian challenged her.

"Shall I, mother?" the girl laughed. "I have a good mind to."

"We shall be delighted if he will," replied Mrs. Pendragon. "And then you can come here to lunch afterwards. That's splendid. Harold, you've got to go to church to-morrow. Mr. Trewithen is going to sit in our pew, and come home to lunch afterwards."

"I didn't say that," replied Gwithian.

"But of course you will come back to lunch," and Mrs. Pendragon looked at him steadily.

A minute later his car was purring its way down the drive towards the lodge gates, and Gwithian was thinking of the scene through which he had just passed. Nothing had happened, and yet he felt a great deal was happening. What was the meaning of that woman's questions? There was something in her face, in her whole manner, which he did not understand.

No sooner had the car passed through the lodge gates than a sudden impulse came to him. He had never been to St. Elizabeth; why should he not go there? He felt a sudden longing to see the cottage in which Karenza lived. Well, why not? It was only four miles away; he could be there in ten minutes.

He turned on the light at the splash-board and looked at the clock; it had barely turned eleven. Yes, he would go; perhaps he might see Karenza.

Passing quickly through the village of Pendragon he turned in the direction of St. Elizabeth. As he had said, it was only a few minutes' drive, and ere long he saw the old square church tower standing out boldly against the sky. All told there were not more than twenty houses in the place. It was one of the smaller parishes of the county, and the village itself was a mere hamlet. What was called St. Elizabeth mine was more than a mile away. He remembered what Karenza had told him concerning the situation of Dorcas Udy's cottage and it did not take him more than a minute to reach it.

It was a humble-looking little place. Judging from the out-

side it could not contain more than two or three tiny rooms; all the same it was picturesque. It was placed a little back from the road, and surrounded by a garden which was plainly visible in the light of the moon. He saw the thatched roof, saw, too, the cob walls which were almost hidden by climbing roses. There were old-fashioned flowers in the garden; dahlias, hydrangeas, and many other gaily coloured shrubs. It was a still summer night in late August; scarcely a breath of wind stirred, and the few clouds which hung in the sky were almost motionless. The glory of summer was beginning to depart, but the air was laden with the sweet perfume of honeysuckle.

Almost unconsciously he drew up in front of the little garden gate and stopped the engine. As he did so his hand touched the knob which communicated with the siren. He was sorry he did this, because he was anxious not to wake the inmates. Still, there was neither sound nor movement from anyone within, so he hoped that no one had heard.

He looked long and steadily at the cottage, and as he did so he felt the grim irony of the situation. He had just come from Pendragon Hall, one of the finest old houses in the West of England. For hundreds of years it had been the home of the Pendragons, and although the line had been broken, it was generally believed that the later owners who had borne the name, were the lineal descendants of the ancient family.

And it was occupied by a woman who had no right to it, while the real owners lived in that tiny cottage.

He felt sure of this, however much his judgment might contradict him. In any case, the children were homeless and friendless. The girl did the coarse work of a mine girl, while the boy, wounded in the defence of his country, was half mad. It was the grimmest piece of irony he had ever come across.

Why did that woman want to speak to him? Why should she ask him his opinion concerning Charlie Tregenny's fitness to be Marjorie's husband? Was that why she really wanted to speak to him? Did she mention Tregenny's name in order to lead him to declare himself? He could not believe it. Tregenny, although the son of an impoverished squire, would still be regarded as a good chance for Marjorie. Besides, why should she want him to declare himself? He was only a passing stranger. Or, had Marjorie confided her feelings to her mother? It might be; he didn't know.

A suspicion came into his mind which became almost a conviction. Had the woman some idea as to what he had been

thinking and doing? Was not that the reason she had tried to find out what places in Cornwall he had visited?

Of course this might be some will-o'-the-wisp of his own imagination, but it held his thoughts.

Then the picture of Marjorie Trounce rose before him as he had seen her that day. A fine well-developed figure; well featured; and bright, laughing eyes; a girl abounding in health and vitality; one who was favoured of the gods with beauty and wealth. And she was fond of him, he was sure she was, or else she was an arrant flirt.

He called to mind a dozen things she had said to him, remembered the glances she had bestowed on him. And he was to meet her at church the next day and go to Pendragon Hall to lunch after. Well, why not? Every selfish instinct of his nature bade him marry her. He would have a handsome, wealthy wife, and a good position in the county. What could he want more?

Again he turned his eyes toward the humble cottage by the roadside, and he saw as he did so, a picture of Karenza Pendragon rise before him; helpless, homeless, destitute.

He was about to start the car and drive toward a spot where he could turn around, when he heard a slight movement, and the door of the cottage opened. He saw Karenza Pendragon coming silently toward the garden gate. She came to him just as a child might, frankly and without reserve.

"I have been thinking about you all day," she said. "I had no reason to believe you would, but I *did* hope you would come. I knew it was you the moment you drove up."

"You were watching me?"

"Yes, I have been watching for hours. I often sit at the window in the evening watching and wondering. If you hadn't come I should have gone to you to-morrow night."

"Why?" he asked.

"I wanted to tell you something. Adam Chignoweth has been again."

"How do you know?" Her statement startled him.

"I saw him, I followed him to Pendragon Hall gates just as I did before."

Gwithian was quick to surmise what this might mean. The man had gone to tell Mrs. Pendragon of his visit, to describe the stranger who had asked him about the late Roger Pendragon's will. Of course, it might be all pure surmise on his part, but that was the line his thoughts took.

"Why should he come to see her again?" she asked.

"There might be a hundred reasons," replied Gwithian. "Remember, he was the confidential clerk of your father's solicitor; as such there may be many things about which she would want to consult him. What more natural?"

"But why should he come at night?"

"Perhaps it was the most convenient time; perhaps because he might not wish to be seen. But his coming may mean nothing. I can see what you have in your mind, but if I were you I would not dwell on it."

The girl looked at him piteously, pathetically.

"Mr. Trewithen," she said suddenly, "do you think there is any hope for us? You know what I have in my mind; do you think there is any hope that it will ever come to pass?"

He did not answer her immediately, he could not.

"Tell me, Mr. Trewithen," she persisted, "do you think there is any hope?"

He tried to tell her, but the words would not come. And yet ought he not? Would it not be more cruel to allow her to believe what could never take place? Surely better for her to know the truth than to build her life on a lie.

"No," he said. "I do not believe there is any hope."

"Do you believe, then, that the will which was read was my father's will?"

"I do not know," he said at last, "but I cannot hold out any hope for you."

For a moment a look of despair, almost of agony, came into her eyes. It seemed as though his words rang like a death-knell in her ears.

"Then you believe that Roger will be always homeless and friendless, with only me to depend on?"

He saw that she was thinking of her brother rather than of herself; that her own future was as nothing compared with his, and a great pity came into his heart. He had spent the afternoon amid scenes of gaiety and laughter; he had rejoiced in the lovely old home which this girl believed to be hers, while she spent her days at the mine, and her nights in this humble cottage.

Then, so strange are the workings of the human heart, that Marjorie Trounce became as nothing to him. Her wealth, her beauty, her position were a chimera, while the lonely girl who stood by his side was everything. He knew then that he loved this poor, destitute creature, and it was the great longing of his life to cherish her, to give her a home, to bestow upon her all he possessed.

Gwithian Trewithen was no longer a boy. He had reached that time of life when most of the illusions of youth have fled. Neither was he a man carried away by foolish fancies. The last ten years had brought him down to the bed-rock of life. He had spent four years in the army amidst all the horrors and ghastliness of war; hundreds of times he had been face to face with death. While never wounded he had known all the horrors of war; he had stood for hours up to the middle in frozen slush. He had heard the pep-pep-pep of machine guns, heard the roar of great artillery, and seen comrades falling at his right and at his left. Those years had, as he had often declared with grim laughter, knocked all the sawdust out of him; made him feel the nakedness of life. He had experienced the disillusionment of those after-the-war days; he had been face to face with poverty. He had risked his all in Africa, he had seen one hope after another come tumbling to the ground, and he had known the emptiness of a woman's promises.

But this was real. It had overturned all his previous notions, all his fondest desires; but he could not help himself. He knew now why he could not speak to Marjorie Trounce; why he could not tell her of the hare-brained fancies which had come into his mind. Deep had called unto deep, and he knew that his life was given to this girl. The realization of it had come to him in a moment, but the thing itself would never leave him in time or eternity.

All this came to him while for a few seconds he looked into the girl's eyes. Standing there alone in the silence of the night she looked so wan, so pitiful; but to him she was as beautiful as the dawn. Her very desolation made her more beautiful. He saw in her the glory of womanhood; read in her heart loyalty, devotion, faithfulness.

"Not while I am alive," he managed to say.

"What do you mean by that?"

He longed to tell her what had come into his heart; to make known to her what he felt for her, but no words would come.

"Do you advise me to give up?" she continued; "to sit supinely while those people batten on what my father meant should be Roger's and mine?"

Still he was silent.

"Because," she went on, "I never will. I am sure of the truth; and somehow it will be brought to light. I do not know when or how, but it will."

"Karenza," he managed to say, and he was unaware that her

name without the prefix had for the first time passed his lips, "I wish I could tell you that I believe as you do, but you would not thank me for buoying you up with false hopes, would you? Besides, there is something else I want to tell you."

"Yes," she queried wonderingly, "what?"

"That I love you," he said simply, "and that it would be the greatest joy of my life if you would allow me to protect you, to care for you, to give you a home."

The girl looked at him with wild, wondering eyes; she did not seem to comprehend what he meant.

"Don't you understand, Karenza?" he pleaded. "I love you, I want you to be my wife."

"You love me?—me!" she gasped.

"With all my heart and life," he replied.

"But why?—why?" and the words escaped her lips unwittingly.

"Because you are my heart's true mate; because you have become everything to me. Can't you understand, Karenza? I love you, I want you to become my wife. I will give my life to care for you, and I will care for Roger as my own brother. We will go away from this place if you wish. Can't you understand? Can you care for me—in that way?"

Slowly the truth came to her. It illumined her features, a brighter light came into her eyes, the blood rushed to her cheeks.

"But it's not true! It can't be true!"

"It *is* true, as true as the sun is true. If you will let me I will take you to Cromlech Cottage; or better still I will provide you a home elsewhere. Let me take your burden, Karenza."

Her lips became tremulous, and it might be that a new-born joy flooded her heart, so great was the change in her face.

"No, no," she said, "it cannot be! It is of your goodness that you say this to me—but I understand. How could such as you—— No, I must fight my battle alone, hopeless as you think it is."

He caught her hand. "But Karenza, Karenza," he urged, "let me tell you——"

She snatched her hand from him. "Don't! don't! don't!" she pleaded, and there was a sob in her voice. Then, without a moment's warning, she left him and rushed into the cottage.

He made as if to go after her, but checked himself. He could not make a scene at such a time—at such a place. His very love for her forbade that. Besides, she did not care for him. Why should she? He had been cruel, cowardly, to speak to her in

such a way ; he had taken advantage of her loneliness, her hopelessness. It was wrong of him to plead his love at such a time.

Almost like an automaton he started the car, drove it on to a broad place in the lane where he turned it around, and then slowly went back past the cottage toward the village of St. Elizabeth. A minute later he was making his way toward Pendragon. It was now midnight, but he did not heed the time ; his mind was too full of what had taken place. Presently he came to Pendragon Church, and as if by instinct he stopped the car and switched off the ignition. The village was asleep, the old church nestled among the trees which surrounded it, and the tower stood out clearly against the moonlit sky. Scarcely realizing what he was doing, he opened the churchyard gate which was unlocked, and wandered down the path toward the entrance door of the sacred edifice. Around him moss-covered gravestones stood ; everything was as silent as death. Why he entered the quaint old porch he did not know, except that somehow he felt it had to do with Karenza. This was Pendragon Church, the place where, through the centuries, the Pendragons had come to worship.

He placed his hand upon the iron ring which lifted the apse. By some strange freak of a chance the door was unlocked. Possibly the sexton had neglected his duty, or possibly Mr. Moss had for some purpose come to the church and then left it, forgetting to lock the door. Anyhow it opened, and he found himself inside the building.

The place was not so dark but that he could plainly see the rows of pillars, the Gothic arches. Involuntarily he thought of a night he had once spent in an old Roman Catholic church in France. It was not so pretty as this, for French village churches are not noted for their architecture. But somehow it had the same feeling ; the same sense of quietness, of refuge. An eerie feeling had possessed him then ; he had called to mind the superstitions which had surrounded that old church ; but he felt nothing of that now. Perhaps the excitement through which he had just passed had caused a reaction, leaving a dull kind of torpor in his heart.

Almost instinctively he found his way toward the spot where the Pendragon vault had been dug.

How silent it was ! how utterly silent ! He almost expected to see something ; to have a repetition of the experiences which had come to him on the evening when he had come with the Vicar ; but he saw nothing. The moonlight which streamed

through the windows, half covered with ivy-leaves, somewhat illumined the place. He saw the Pendragon vault, saw the spot where the great stone slab covering the Pendragon vault was laid; but beyond that nothing.

"It must have been all a dream, all a fancy," he reflected. "What have I to do with the Pendragons?"

But his love for Karenza was not a dream, not a fancy. Even here in the silence of the old church it surged up within him like a mighty torrent. But it was hopeless. As soon as the girl had realized what was in his mind she had refused to listen; she had snatched her hand from his and rushed to the cottage. But his love would never leave him, never. Why had he come there? Why, when every fibre of his being was calling for Karenza, had he found his way into the lonely old church? He did not know, he could not tell, except that something had drawn him there.

He left the church as quietly as he had entered, and then drove back to Cromlech Cottage, little dreaming of what would come to him next.

CHAPTER XVII

A MAD RESOLVE

FOR more than an hour Gwithian sat alone. It had been the strangest day he had ever known; it had been a day of revelation, of wild hope, of disappointment. His newly discovered love had lifted him to a mountain-peak of happiness; it had also dashed him into a deep, dark chasm of despair. He had discarded a love which he felt sure was his; he had also given up a dream of wealth, of beauty, of position.

But that troubled him not one whit. He did not love Marjorie Trounce; he never had; he never would. The girl had made an appeal to his senses, to his cupidity, to his pride; but the moment he realized his love for Karenza all this became as nothing.

Of course he had been mad; he had no right to speak to her in such a way. He should have tried to make her care for him, and have chosen a favourable opportunity to speak. And yet he was glad he had spoken, even although she had refused to listen. Besides, he could not help himself; he had simply done what his heart compelled him to do.

For the hundredth time he tried to think how he could help her, how he could translate her hopes into realities. But that was impossible. Child of Roger Pendragon she undoubtedly

was, but there was no more hope of her gaining what she believed to be her right than there was of her becoming Queen of England. In a way he was glad of this ; it would make her more dependent upon him who would rejoice to give her everything he possessed.

And she had refused to listen to him, refused even to give him a suggestion of encouragement.

At length he found his way to his bedroom. By this time every article of furniture had become familiar to him and the room had a feeling of home. But there was something which he could not understand ; something which made him apprehensive. During his schooldays he had in the main lived the life of a healthy young animal. Like most public schoolboys he was taught to believe in God, and he had a vague belief in the tenets of the Christian religion. But he thought very little about such things. They might be all right for women, but personally he had very little use for them. Then came the war, and whatever faith he had was smashed to smithereens. How could a man believe in God while hell was all around him ? Since coming to Cornwall, however, new influences had entered his life. How it came about he did not know, but he was changed. While he was in France God seemed nowhere ; now He was everywhere. The explanation of life's experiences were not material, they were spiritual.

Involuntarily he fell on his knees and prayed. What he prayed about he did not know ; he could not remember formulating a single thought, but he had a consciousness that he was in the presence of God.

It was a long time before he fell asleep, and when at length he did so strange dreams came to him.

He was at Pendragon Hall again. . . . He saw Mrs. Pendragon moving among her guests, but behind her, ever and always, was a shadowy form. What or who it was he could not tell, but it was always there. . . . He was alone with Marjorie Trounce, they were taking a walk together amidst leafy woods. He was admiring her beauty, the brightness of her eyes, the fresh colour of her cheeks. Then as he looked, her beauty faded away and he saw only a grinning skull. . . . He was out on the Bodmin Moors alone, a wild storm was raging and he was fighting with the elements. . . . A ghastly fear possessed him and he found himself running away from something ; he knew not what. All around him the wind roared, and the rain dashed upon his face. But it was not these things that troubled him ; he was followed by something evil, something menacing. At length he turned to face it and found himself in a life-and-death

struggle. His strength was being overcome, and his enemy was making him yield to his power. . . . A vivid flash of lightning lit up the moors, and also lit up the face of the thing that was fighting him . . . it was the face of Adam Chignoweth. . . .

Everything was changed. Instead of a wild stormy night with rolling thunders and flashes of vivid lightning, was a rural peaceful scene. He saw Pendragon village again, saw the old church tower, while the many-gabled church nestled among the trees. . . .

He heard a peal of bells calling the people to worship. . . . It was evening-time, and the day was slowly dying. . . . He was in the church alone save for a shadowy figure which he could not recognize. Presently the figure outlined itself and he saw Karenza ; she was standing close by the vault where her father was buried. She was pointing toward it. . . . The great stone slab which covered the tomb rolled back and he saw its interior. A coffin lay open ; there was nothing in it save a roll of paper. . . .

He was in his own bedroom ; he was lying asleep. He saw himself plainly, saw the bedclothes rise and fall, saw his own face, saw the beads of perspiration upon his forehead. Then he saw the repetition of the something which had come to him on a previous night. . . .

Standing at the foot of the bed was the figure of Roger Pendragon. He saw the right hand move ; saw it uplifted three times as it had been uplifted before, and point to the left arm where he saw something which looked like a roll of paper.

Then all became dark. . . . He woke to a glorious summer morning ; the birds were singing, the cattle were lowing in the fields near by. He heard the ripple of the brook in the near distance, caught the brightness of the sun as it streamed through his window.

The earlier parts of his mind's wanderings were dim and shadowy, but the latter parts were as clear as though he had seen them in reality. Indeed, at that moment he could have sworn that he had seen them in reality.

He looked at his watch ; it was just seven o'clock, and probably Cradock would be still asleep. Acting upon impulse he hastily dressed and made his way into the garden. Not a cloud hung in the sky ; the fields lay bathed in sunlight ; the air was like the elixir of the gods. It was a morning to rejoice in, a morning to thank God for.

He found his way to the garage. The radiator of his car was still warm after the run of the previous night. He backed it

into the lane and a few minutes later was out on the broad highway. He rejoiced as the car cut the wind ; he felt like shouting as he saw the glint of the wide wild sea. God was in His heaven, all was right with the world.

He understood nothing, he did not want to understand. He felt like Huxley is said to have felt when he saw the sunrise over the Swiss mountains.

"I cannot see God," the great scientist was reported to have said, "but I feel Him."

If God was God, all things were possible. He remembered the words which Alexandre Dumas had put into the mouth of an old French abbé : "Who talks of God and despair in the same breath ? " What if life did not yield to him the hopes he cherished ? What if even his love were a mockery ? Even then, God lived and would do all things well.

The thought possessed him, thrilled him. Oh, it was wonderful to live !

The car swept on. After several miles he found himself passing through St. Ives, a quaint little fishing town which was in danger of being spoilt by the invasion of the outside world ; passed up the steep hill which led to Gurnard's Head. Up hill and down dale he went, ever keeping the sea in sight. Here was a rugged tor, there a deep valley. The heather was in bloom, the foxgloves made the country-side look glorious. Hill rose upon hill in majestic splendour. He saw Gurnard's Head standing boldly out into the sea ; he saw the great rugged rocks against which the sea dashed itself ; he remembered being there with Marjorie Trounce, and with that remembrance he came back to the mundane world again.

All he had seen and heard had not taken place for nothing ; he must *do* something. Everything had a meaning ; it was a call to him. . . . By the time he got back to Cromlech Cottage he had covered more than forty miles. It was now nine o'clock and he heard the Pendragon Church bells ringing. He remembered his challenge to Marjorie Trounce, remembered that he was expected at Pendragon Hall to lunch. But he would not go, such a thing would be a mockery now.

He hastily scribbled two notes : one to Mrs. Pendragon, telling her that he would be unable to accept her kind invitation ; the other to Doctor Borlase, asking him whether he could see him if he called that afternoon. After that he gave himself up to reflection.

Before noon, Susan Jory's grandson, who had been sent with

the notes, returned. There was no message from Pendragon Hall, but he got a letter from the doctor saying that as he was going to be away the whole day he could not see him that afternoon, but if convenient he would call at Cromlech Cottage about nine that night.

* * * * *

"And you say you dreamt all this?" said the doctor after a long silence.

"Call it a dream if you like," replied Gwithian.

He had told the doctor his whole story with the exception of his meetings with Karenza and Roger Pendragon. He had learnt to like, and to trust this kind-hearted, hard-headed, keen-witted Cornish doctor, and had spoken to him freely; but he had not been able to bring himself to the point of telling of his meetings with Karenza. That was something too sacred even for the doctor to hear. Neither had he mentioned that in his dream he had seen Karenza at her father's tomb and saw her pointing toward it. With the exception of that, however, he had told him everything of importance.

"After all, it is only a dream, and leads nowhere," said the doctor.

"What is a dream?" asked Gwithian.

"I don't know," replied the doctor; "no one does. Men may pretend to explain these things in scientific terms, but facts laugh at 'em, just laugh at 'em. I have learnt enough, Trewithen, to know what a fool I am."

"That's the beginning of knowledge," replied the other.

Each was sitting in an arm-chair in Cromlech Cottage living-room. It was now past ten o'clock and Cradock had retired to bed. The doctor had had a hard day and was tired; but Gwithian had aroused him to activity again; moreover, he was glad to be with the young man: he was a bachelor and often felt lonely.

"Did you tell me," asked the doctor at length, "that you have grounds for believing young Roger Pendragon to be alive?"

Gwithian nodded.

"What are they?"

"I'd rather not tell you yet; but I have certain evidence. I have learnt, too, that his sister is not married, nor is she living in Scotland as you had heard."

"Then where is she?"

"It's not a bit of good discussing that until our foundation, are more secure. As I told you the last time we met, Borlases

that story of yours has haunted me ever since I came ; it's haunting me still. Why I am dragged into the business in this unaccountable way I don't know ; but there it is. I have a feeling that we ought to do something."

"What can we do ? What is there to be done ? That woman reigns at Pendragon Hall while my old friend's children are——"

"Destitute—penniless," interposed Gwithian.

Again there was a long silence between them.

"And you say," went on the doctor, "that in your dream, or whatever it was, the figure of Roger Pendragon raised its right arm and pointed to something in the hollow of its left arm."

Gwithian nodded. "Just like this," he said.

"Of course," said the doctor after another long silence, "it's all moonshine. No man in his senses would give a second's thought to it. All the same, what you have told me makes me think in spite of myself. If my old friend Roger Pendragon is alive—that is, if the *essential* Roger Pendragon, apart from all physical considerations, is alive, as I am convinced he is, he has the same affections, the same feelings of righteousness as he had when I used to know him. . . . And he *did* love those children . . . loved them with every fibre of his being. That's the fact which through the years has stood out as the one thing I am sure of. I know he became largely a creature of that woman ; I know that she made his life a hell. But I couldn't believe at the time, and I can't believe now, that my friend made a will giving that woman everything, and leaving his children nothing. I have told myself a hundred times that I am a fool ; but the will was read after the funeral, it has been proved, and that woman has entered into possession. All the same, I can't believe that he did it. He told me with his own lips—on his death-bed, Trewithen—that he had left practically everything to his children."

After that, question followed question concerning Gwithian's visit to Adam Chignoweth, of what the man had said, how he looked, of the impressions he had made.

"Tell me about this dream of yours again," said the doctor presently. "I think it is all tomfoolery, but I want to hear it repeated ; I want to be certain."

Again Gwithian, with many interruptions, and amidst many questionings, retold his story, while the doctor smoked pipe after pipe of tobacco.

"We are helpless, utterly helpless," he ejaculated at length ; "we can do nothing."

"I am not so sure," asserted Gwithian.

"Not so sure! What do you mean?"

"It depends on whether we have any belief in what I have been telling you. It depends, too, on whether we have any pluck."

"What's pluck to do with it?"

"Everything. Look here, Borlase; I have thought of this thing until I am nearly mad. Naturally I have no connection with it, but in spite of myself, I have been dragged into it. It has obsessed me, gripped my imagination, made me a kind of bond-slave to it. Say I am neurotic if you will; say that I am a victim of the Celtic imagination—anything you like, but here it is. I am here in Cromlech Cottage; it was at one time owned by the Pendragons, and one of the Pendragons is said to have lived here. I was met here with strange rumours, curious experiences; and little by little my mind has been led to—what it has."

"What's the meaning of it?"

"Yes, what's the meaning of it? Why I should be fixed on, I don't know; but that face came to me in my dream so vividly that I sketched it, only to find that it was identical with the face of Roger Pendragon, whose portrait hangs in the Pendragon library. And this is only a part of the whole, all the experiences of the past few weeks point in the same direction."

"Well, what do you make of it? What shall we do?" The doctor spoke as though he were angry.

Gwithian was silent.

"What must we do?" persisted the doctor. "This rigmarole of yours has a meaning, I suppose?"

"You say you feel sure that the will read on the day of Roger Pendragon's funeral was not Roger Pendragon's will?"

"Yes," replied the doctor.

"Then where is it?"

Again a long silence fell between them; each lit and re-lit his pipe, and stared at each other as if afraid to utter the thoughts which had come to their minds.

"I wish to heaven you hadn't come, Trewithen!" the doctor broke out suddenly. "The thing had become practically dead to me, but you woke it into life. But for you, these old ghosts of the past would never have been resurrected."

"I know what we are going to do," burst out Gwithian suddenly.

"What?"

"We are going to break open that vault and see what's inside."

"Don't be mad, man! The thing is impossible!"

"Nothing's impossible."

"But it is; it's out of the question."

Again a silence fell between them.

"Of course, I guessed what was in your mind the whole time," the doctor asserted presently; "but we may as well dismiss that at once. Whatever else can be done, *that* can't be done."

"Why?"

"Why, man, all sorts of formalities would have to be complied with. You may as well put it out of your mind right away."

"Why?" Gwithian persisted.

"Well, for one thing, we'd have to give sufficient reason for such an unheard-of action. We would have to present sufficient evidence to prove that something was wrong. Where can we get that evidence? We should have to persuade the Home Secretary that there was sufficient reason for what is called 'exhumation'; otherwise it would be sacrilege. The law of England is very strict on such matters, and no grave can be exhumed without a special permit from the Home Secretary. And Home Secretaries do not act lightly."

"You mean——?"

"I mean this," asserted the doctor: "in order to open the Pendragon vault, you would have to get special permission from the Home Secretary. And the Home Secretary could not give that special permission without very serious reasons. What sufficient reasons could you give? Supposing you told him what you have told me to-night; is it likely he would believe it? He would say 'this is the meanderings of a disordered brain,' and he would laugh at you. We have not the shadow of a tittle of evidence, and we should become a byword and a laughing-stock. Besides, that woman would learn what we were trying to do."

"Then we must open the vault without the Home Secretary's permission," said Gwithian quietly.

The doctor started, and gasped at the other's assertion.

"You don't mean that!"

"I certainly do."

"Why, man, it would be a *crime*! We should place ourselves in the grip of the *law*! We should be prosecuted for *sacrilege*!"

"Who'd prosecute us?" asked Gwithian. "Would that woman? I don't believe it. Besides, no one would know."

"But it's a tremendous affair!" insisted the doctor. "That stone slab will be cemented around the tomb. It would have to be cut away with a cold chisel. Then the coffin would have to be opened. Should you dare do it?"

Gwithian was silent again. The doctor was watching him closely; noting the firm lines around his mouth; noting, too, the furrowed forehead. This was not a man to be easily turned aside from his purpose.

Again a silence fell between them. Each was watching the other furtively; trying to read what was in each other's mind.

"Of course, you will give up your mad idea," ejaculated the doctor at length.

Gwithian did not speak.

"If you were not a fit inmate for Bedlam you would never have thought of it."

Still Gwithian was silent. The doctor looked at his watch.

"I must be going soon," he said. "You wouldn't care to walk part of the way with me, I suppose?"

The only answer Gwithian gave was to sink deeper into his chair and give the other a searching glance.

"It would do you good," persisted the doctor, "you haven't had a walk to-day."

"Do you feel nervous?" asked Gwithian, and he laughed as he spoke.

"Nervous? Do you take me for a kid? Do you imagine that I pay any attention to your silly yarn? I was only thinking that we might go into the church together."

"What for?"

"Just to look."

"How could we get in? The door would be locked."

"I know old Franky Flew's habits. Half the time he doesn't lock the door, and even when he does I know where he puts the key. Franky has been sexton there for forty years and I know his habits well. He gets converted at the Methodist Chapel every winter and then he is religious until Pendragon Feast; after that he becomes a backslider, 'falls back,' as he calls it. From Pendragon Feast till the time he gets converted again he's generally more or less drunk. He has a peculiar superstition about the church key. He's afraid to leave it at his house lest someone should steal it, so it's put in a hiding-place. I am the only one who knows where that hiding-place is. I can easily find it and we can go into the church together without anyone knowing."

"Why should we?" asked Gwithian. "If my story is, as you say, a pack of nonsense, and if my ideas are only fit for Bedlam, why bother about going?"

The doctor laughed uneasily. "Just to show you I am not

afraid," he said. "Besides, there is no harm in examining the thing."

"All right, I'll go."

"What a blessing it is that you and I are bachelors, Trewithen," remarked the doctor as they walked away together.

"Why is it a blessing?"

"Because we haven't to explain our outgoings or incomings to anyone. Neither of us has a jealous wife who demands a reason for our staying out late or anything of that sort. By the way, we ought to have a light."

"Why?"

"It would help us to examine the vault."

"But we're not going to examine the vault; you told me it would be madness."

"We may as well have a look at it while we are there."

"Just so," said Gwithian. "I put an electric lamp in my pocket before coming out."

They went on together, crossed the brook, and walked in the direction of the Pendragon village without speaking a word.

"We're two blithering idiots," broke out the doctor. "If we weren't we should never dream of such a thing."

"What thing?"

"Oh, we shall do it!" and the doctor spoke angrily; "we shan't rest until we are absolutely sure. I am as big a fool as you are; no better, and no worse. Besides, the thought of those two young people being robbed worries me. Wouldn't it set the whole country on fire if anything were to come of it?"

Again they walked on in silence. They passed the lodge gates, and silently neared the village. Suddenly Gwithian felt his arm gripped as if by a vice; the doctor's hand quivered like an aspen leaf.

"Let's do it to-night!" he whispered excitedly.

"Do what?"

"Open the blessed thing. No one would know."

"We have made no preparations," replied Gwithian. "As you say, it will need a hammer and a cold chisel. We shall also need a screwdriver to unscrew the coffin."

"My God!" exclaimed the doctor, "*I can't do it! It's too horrible!*"

The terror of the thing gripped him; his imagination had told him what it meant.

"What is there to frighten you?" asked Gwithian. "You doctors have a good deal to do with the dead. I imagine that the

people you keep *alive* are very few, but you've had to sign a good many *death* certificates." And Gwithian laughed grimly.

"Yes, but this is different; it's out of the ordinary beat of things. Even you must feel it. But there, come on!"

They continued to walk toward the village while the doctor kept his hand on Gwithian's arm.

"What if we should be forestalled?" he asked presently.

"Forestalled? What do you mean?"

"Do you think Adam Chignoweth has found out who you are?"

"How could he find out?"

"You say he has been to see that woman again. How you know you won't tell me, but you say you are certain. If—if there is anything in it he will know, and he'll move heaven and earth to save himself. You see that, don't you? We should feel like two tomfools if we went to that place and found that he had been there before us."

They entered the village and made straight for the churchyard gates. Every one was abed; not a light was to be seen anywhere. The Vicarage, which stood near by, was hidden by trees.

They went down the path which led to the church porch, the doctor still holding Gwithian's arm.

"The key is here," he whispered presently as he led the other toward the tower. "There is a cunning little hole in the wall at the back of this grating. Here it is."

He took out a huge key as he spoke and a few minutes later they were at the church door. Evidently the lock was not often oiled; the sound of the turning key reverberated through the church.

"Listen," whispered the doctor as they entered, "wasn't that the sound of footsteps?"

They stood close to the baptismal font as he spoke. They could hear nothing.

The sound of their footsteps echoed as they made their way up the church aisle. There was no matting or carpet of any sort; there was a brick pavement, and that was all.

No moon shone that night; the sky was covered by light clouds; nevertheless, there was light enough for them to dimly see the outlines of the church. The rows of pillars looked like rows of sentinels watching to see that all was well.

"Hark!" cried the doctor, "there is a noise somewhere."

"It's only the church clock beginning to strike," Gwithian replied quietly; nevertheless, he shivered as he spoke. He was glad the doctor was with him.

The clock chimed out the hour, the hour of midnight.

They waited until the last stroke sounded, and they heard it's echo reverberating through the building.

"The vault's just here," said the doctor.

Gwithian took his electric lamp and flashed its bright light upon the floor. Yes, there was the tomb; it had been untouched since the day Roger Pendragon was buried there. They carefully examined the cement around the stone, noted the words that had been inscribed upon it.

"I believe it can be done easily enough," Gwithian said; "that cement looks soft. For that matter I doubt if it's cement at all. I will have everything ready by to-morrow night."

"Not to-morrow night," gasped the doctor.

"Why not?"

"I can't, that's all. I have to be out of Pendragon. I have to be in Truro—a most important engagement."

"Then Tuesday?"

"Yes, I will be ready on Tuesday night at midnight. The moon will be rising about that time."

The doctor's voice was tremulous, great beads of perspiration were standing upon his brow.

"You know the Pendragon pew," he went on. "This is it. My old friend Roger used to sit there. Hark!"

Both listened intently. Yes, there could be no doubt about it; each of them heard the sound of footsteps on the gravel of the path outside.

CHAPTER XVIII

FRANKY FLEW

WHILE the two men were together in the Pendragon Church, two people sat together alone in Pendragon Hall. It was the only room that was lit in the whole building; elsewhere the great house was in darkness.

"It's the same man, I tell you."

"Perhaps you are mistaken."

"But it is; I am sure."

"Tell me how you are sure."

The two people who spoke were Mrs. Anna Pendragon and Adam Chignoweth. The latter had come to the Hall a few minutes before and had been admitted without a word. His features worked nervously; his face was deathly pale; fear was in his light-grey eyes. By his side was a glass of whisky and soda in which the whisky preponderated.

"Of course, the fellow set me thinking," said the man. "What wonder?"

"But you say he called himself Rosewarne."

"I am not a fool," he replied. "I should never have done what I have done if I had been a fool. Of course, I made no sign, I am not that kind of man; but when the fellow mentioned the name of Pendragon he startled me. It was the first time I had heard it for nearly ten years—at least in that way."

"Tell me about it; describe him again." The woman's face was hard and stern, not a nerve quivered, there was not even a tremor of an eyelid.

"It was last Wednesday; the time was about three o'clock in the afternoon. I had taken a garden chair into a shady place and was settling down for a snooze. Then I heard the garden gate click and this man came in. Of course, I suspected nothing, although I wondered who wanted to see me. I have made no friends in Fowey; I have kept every one at a distance. Gossiping is always dangerous; one sometimes inadvertently lets words drop which would be better unspoken. I summed him up in a minute. A sharp, clever fellow with a strong square face and piercing eyes. I felt suspicious of him. I don't know why, but I did, and I answered him a bit sharply. He began by asking me if I knew anything about old Trefry's oldest son, whom he said he had met years before. That startled me a little and set me thinking; still I shouldn't have paid so much attention to it, but presently he mentioned the young cub whom *you* used to love so," and he laughed grimly.

"Young Roger Pendragon?" said the woman.

"Young Roger Pendragon," repeated the man. "He said he met him in the Army during the war. You can imagine that that aroused me. Of course, I kept perfectly calm outwardly, but he made me feel uneasy; you can guess why."

"What was there to make you feel uneasy?" asked the woman sharply.

The man looked at the woman steadily for perhaps half a minute.

"You were always a cool one," he said; "but remember this"—by this time there was a flush on his face and a peculiar expression in his eyes. Perhaps the strong potations which he had been taking gave him French courage—"you are as deep in it as I am."

"Don't talk nonsense; everything was open and above board; everything was strictly lawful."

"Anyhow," went on the man after another silence, "the conversation led up to Roger Pendragon's will."

The woman gave a slight start which was scarcely perceptible, but the man noted it.

"How did the conversation lead to that?"

"He said the young cub had told him that he had been defrauded," and he related his conversation with Gwithian.

"Well, go on! What happened next?"

"Of course, I pretended that I had forgotten all about it—but Great Heavens, I hadn't; I never *shall* forget! Then I pretended to reflect, and to remember what took place. I told him that while it might appear strange that the late owner should leave his children nothing, those same children had acted in such a way, and wounded their father's feelings so sorely, that he grew impatient with them, and in spite of your pleadings had disinherited them. I told him that it was I who had copied the will, and engrossed it. I told him also that there was not the slightest doubt of its validity and orderliness. All the same, I was shaken."

"Why should you be shaken?"

"I was anyhow. Fancy after the thing had been lying dead for ten years, that it should come to light like that. I didn't like the fellow's face either; his eyes seemed to bore into me; and although he spoke in a kind of casual way he seemed to be reading me like a book. After he'd gone I went over the whole business again. Then I came to you."

"It was a very foolish thing to do. If you had the courage of a rabbit, you wouldn't have given a second thought to the thing."

"Well, I did anyhow. I spent the whole day thinking about it. I calculated as to every possible contingency; went over the whole business point by point, item by item. Oh, I haven't lived on a bed of roses these last ten years, I can tell you."

"Then you ought to have. You have been well off and comfortable."

"That's all very well, but—anyhow, when I was here last I described the fellow to you, and even you were nervous. You who have the cunning of the devil, and a heart of stone."

"Don't go into hysterics," said the woman a little scornfully. "There is no need of that."

"Anyhow," and the man spoke truculently, "you were anxious that I should see him; anxious that I should be sure whether the tenant of Cromlech Cottage was the man who had come to see me. I received your special message early this morning

and decided to come straight away. He didn't turn up here to lunch. Why ? "

" He sent a note telling me why," replied the woman.

" He gave a silly excuse, but no reasons. Of course, it may mean nothing disturbing, but I determined to make sure. I have been hanging around Cromlech Cottage all the evening."

" And you saw him ? "—the woman could not suppress the eager tone that came into her voice.

" Yes, I saw him ; he's the man who visited me at Fowey."

" You are sure ? "

" Sure ! I can swear to it. I went away alone to think what it meant."

" It probably means nothing," said the woman almost lightly. " For that matter, what can it mean ? In all probability, his visit to you needs no explanation at all."

" Then why should he tell me that his name was Rosewarne ? "

" Come now, Adam," said the woman, " what possible reason for fear can there be ? Even if there is any truth in all you are suspecting ;—what then ? What can he do ? "

" Nothing," replied the man after a long silence, " unless——"

" Yes, unless what ? "

" I shouldn't have thought so much about it," he said like one reflecting, " if I hadn't seen that damned doctor."

" Doctor ? What do you mean ? " There was a new note in the woman's voice, a note which might mean anything.

" Borlase. You know he was never a friend of yours. He came a little after nine o'clock, and they were there together when I left the house. I tried to listen, but I could hear nothing."

* * * * *

The following morning as Gwithian Trewithen sat at breakfast, Cradock came to him and announced that an old man, Franky Flew by name, wanted to see him.

" Franky Flew ? " repeated the young man. " I seem to have heard the name. Do you know him ? "

" No, sir—yes, sir—that is, I can't say I have any acquaintance with him, but one evening when I was in at Pendragon I stopped at the King's Head—as you know, I'm not a drinking man, sir—when I found the landlord was on the point of throwing out a man who was very drunk. He told me he was called Franky Flew and that he was the village sexton."

Gwithian's mind flashed quickly back to his conversation with Doctor Borlase on the previous night.

" Show him in," he said.

"He's quite sober now, sir," Cradock informed him, "and appears a very respectable man. I suppose Mr. Moss, the Vicar, has been on the point of discharging him several times, but he hasn't done it; I fancy he's afraid."

"Afraid? What of?"

"Of hurting people's feelings. I am told that this man has been sexton for many years, and that although he's frequently drunk, there would be a tremendous outcry if he were, what they call, sacked. People wouldn't think they were buried properly unless Franky buried them."

A minute later Gwithian found himself confronted by an elderly man between sixty and seventy years of age who looked at him appraisingly.

"Ah," he said when he had looked at Gwithian for some seconds, "iss, you're the man."

"I am the man? What man?"

"My name is Francis Flew. I was christened Francis and I've a right to it, although people will call me Franky. But I didn't come to talk to you about that. I went to the doctor's early this morning but 'ee was gone. That's why I comed to you."

He spoke in sharp, jerky sentences, and seemed more than a little excited. His eyes were wild, too, and Gwithian had suspicions about his sanity.

"Well, sir, what do you think of me?"

"What do I think of you?"

"Iss, what do you think of me? For let me tell you this, I bean't no ordinary man. I be'n sexton of this parish for more than forty year; I've see'd Vicars come and Vicars go, but they ca'ant do without me. Mr. Moss 'ave threatened to sack me again and again; but 'ee daren't do it. And why daren't 'ee do it? 'Cause I be indispensable. 'Ee can't get another man to take my place. Do you think people would laive anybody else bury 'em? Not likely."

"That's very interesting," replied Gwithian, catching the humour of the situation. "I suppose they think that no one else could bury them properly?"

"Tedn't only that, sir; it's something more important. You are a gentleman and you knaw the old saying: 'Poets are born, not made.' The same is true of sextons. Sextons are born, not made, and I am the only born sexton in the parish."

"A sort of church fixture, eh?" laughed Gwithian.

"I don't say that. I am independent of all churches; for that matter I am not a churchman, I am a chapelman."

"Indeed; and yet you're the sexton?"

"That needs a bit of explaining, sir. I 'ave nothing to say against Mr. Moss or the Parish Church; but what I do ask is this. Whenever was a man converted in the Parish Church? Never one. I 'ave lived at Pendragon all my life and I've said it to the Vicar many a time. They can't convert people there."

"And can they at chapel?"

"Where should I be if they couldn't?" asked Franky solemnly. "I tell 'ee, sir, I be longing for a revival to start at the chapel again."

"Why are you longing for a revival?"

"Why, sir, what would 'appen to me if I was to die at this minute? I should go to 'ell. I do get converted up to the chapel every November as regular as clockwork, and I'd' stand it till St. Gwithian Feast, and then I'd' fall back. I can't stand the temptation to 'ave a glass too much. If there is one thing I do pray for, it is that I mayn't die 'tween August and November. No, sir, nobody do ever get converted to church, you must go to chapel for that. That's why although I am the village sexton I bean't what you call a sound churchman."

"It seems to me," replied Gwithian, "that you're not a great credit to the chapel if you fall back every year."

"That's my affair, sir, not yours," retorted Franky. "And come to that, I didn't mean to talk about these things at all; I've come for somethin' else. I've come for your good," he added in a whisper.

"That's very kind of you."

"'Zackly, sir. I do'ant say I do'ant want a job; I do. Every funeral is worth something to me. All the same, I do'ant want to bury you."

"I am afraid I don't quite follow you."

"And yet I spoase you do call yourself a scholar and a gentleman. That shows that education doesn't do much. Not that I do'ant believe in education; I do. In a way I am the best educated man in the parish. I knaw more about politics than Squire Hendy, I knaw more about theology than the Superintendent Wesleyan minister, and I'd' knaw nearly as much about medicine as Doctor Borlase. So that ef anybody do tell you that Franky Flew edn' an educated man you can tell 'im 'ee's a liard."

"I see you're a character."

"Character! That's what I be. That's why the passon ca'ant 'ford to get rid of me."

"Well, why have you come to see me?"

"Ah! that's the point," and he looked at Gwithian scrutinizingly. "You 'ave your own secrets," he said meaningly.

"My own secrets! Thousands of 'em. But what of that?"

"*Last night!—In the church!* You do mind, sir," he whispered. "No, I'm not asking you for nothin', I wouldn't have nothin' ef you was to offer't to me, although as you might say I am not in a converted state now. I falled back three weeks agone; but I wouldn't 'ave nothin'."

Gwithian looked at the man more intently, and saw that although he was a great deal excited, he was in earnest.

"I be what you might call a learned man," Franky went on. "I've read the Bible through three times, and I do read Reynolds' Newspaper every Sunday. I know arithmetic up to long divison, although I do'ant like reduction a bit. All the same, I 'ad a token last night."

"A token?"

"A token. I am a widow man, sir; my wife died seven year agone. But I do'ant want to talk about she. She's better off where she es, and I am better off without 'er. But I 'ad a token. A wood-dove came to my window and flapped 'is wings three times after dark. I am not a superstitious man, sir, but I knawed it meant somethin'; so I got out of bed and dressed. I knawed somethin' 'ad 'appened; I knawed it was a warnin' for me or for somebody."

"Well, what then?"

"You be friends with the doctor, bean't 'ee? It's no use your denying it, I knaw you be."

"And if I am?"

"Nothing bad, sir; the doctor and me be great friends."

"Come now, we're not getting any forrader. Tell me why you came to see me."

"I bean't 'fraid of spirits, sir. Hour after hour I've walked our churchyard alone after dark and I've never see'd nothin' worse than myself. In my time I've defied the devil, sir. I've gone round a gravestone seven times backward saying the Lord's Prayer backward every time, but I've never raised the devil."

Gwithian could not help laughing. He realized that Franky had not got a reputation for being a character for nothing.

"All the same, sir, when that token came I knowed 'twas a call, and I determined to go to the church."

"You say this was last night?"

"Last night."

"What time?"

"Nearly twelve o'clock. Well, sir, I went to the place where I do keep the church key and 'twas gone!"

Gwithian remembered what the doctor had told him and listened attentively.

"The key was gone, sir, and then I knawed that one of two things 'ad 'appened. One was that the doctor 'ad took it, or else the devil 'ad come for me."

"Why should the devil come for you?"

"'Cause I bean't converted. Anyhow, the key 'ad gone. And what do you think 'appened then, sir?"

"How can I tell?"

"I see'd a light in the church and then I knaw'd that 'twad'n the devil."

"You think the devil wouldn't dare to go to church?"

"Catch'n!" cried Franky with emphasis. "All the same I was purty feared and didn't knaw what to do."

"Did you go into the church?"

"No, sir, but I did something else. I went down the churchyard path and looked in at the window at the place where you can see the Communion. You can guess what I see'd."

"How can I guess?"

"Come, come now, you bean't a fool. I see'd you and Doctor Borlase standing close by the screen. What might 'ee 'ave been doing there, sir? Now, I tell 'ee straight, if it ad'n a bin for Doctor Borlase I should 'ave gone to the Vicar fust thing this morning and told 'un."

"Told him what?"

"Told'n that I see'd 'ee in the church at midnight. I be a backslider, that's what I be, but I should 'ave told'n."

"Have you got your pipe with you?" asked Gwithian.

"Pipe, sir? I never go without it. But I ain't got no 'bacca."

"Try some of mine," and he offered him his pouch.

"That's your sorts, sir. Now we can talk comfortable like."

Gwithian waited while Franky lit his pipe, and watched the look of satisfaction on his face.

"You be a gen'l'man, that's what you be," remarked Franky in tones of satisfaction, "and you be a friend of the doctor. That's why I 'aven't said a word to nobody. Why you and the doctor was there I do'ant knaw, and I do'ant ax 'ee, although I spoase you 'ad a mainin'. But I was purtly frightened."

"Is that all you have come to see me about?"

"No, sir, 'tedn," and Franky spoke in a sepulchral whisper. "I do'ant know why you went there with the doctor and I do'ant ax. The doctor is a friend of mine and the doctor had a reason for taking you there, or 'ee wud'dn 'ave gone. That's what I told myself. I watched 'ee as you left the church; I watched 'ee go with the doctor up to 'is 'ouse, and I see'd a light in 'is surgery. And now I 'ave come to the thing I wanted to tell 'ee 'bout. You must be careful!" he whispered in awestruck tones.

"Careful? What do you mean?"

"I d'main this. D'rectly after you'd gone with the doctor into 'is 'ouse, I, being a thinking man, began to reflect. I began to ax myself what the doctor was doing there, and so I went back to the churchyard again. I do'ant ax 'ee to tell me nothin', sir; and I do'ant ax 'ee to give me nothin', and I ain't goin' to say nothin' to nobody 'bout what I see'd. I bean't going to get the doctor into trouble for nobody; 'ee've been too kind to me for that. But I 'adn't been long in the churchyard afore I 'eard footsteps. Remember, 'twas after twelve o'clock, and the place seemed as quiet as death. All the same, I 'eard footsteps. 'Twad'n you, and 'twad'n the doctor, sir, 'cause you was both in the doctor's 'ouse. Well, what did I do? I just 'id myself behind one of the buttresses and waited. Then I seed'n come."

"Saw who come?"

"A man, an oldish, grey-bearded man; I seed'n in the light of the moon. 'Ee opened the churchyard gates and then looked around as though 'ee was afraid to be see'd; then 'ee comed quietly towards the church. When 'ee comed to the porch 'ee went in, and I 'eard'n trying to open the door; but 'ee couldn'. The doctor 'ad locked it and put away the key. Then 'ee comed up close to where I was and tried to look into the church. 'Ee tried to look in at the very window where I was lookin' when I see'd you and the doctor."

"Who was it?" asked Gwithian.

"Wait a minute, I a'ant finished yet. As I told 'ee, I was behind the buttress and I could see everything although nobody could see me. Not that I could see the man's face, 'cause I couldn't, but I 'eard 'un."

"What did you hear?"

"I 'eard'n say as plainly as I've 'eard you speakin' this mornin', 'Dead men tell no tales,' 'ee said, 'dead men tell no tales.'"

"Was that all?"

"Ed'n that enough? 'Ee said it over to 'isself several times. Then after a bit I 'eard 'im say, 'My God! if they only could!'"

There could be no doubt about it, Franky was terribly in earnest. He spoke in a low, hoarse whisper, while in his eyes was a look of terror. For several seconds he remained silent, looking at Gwithian as though unable to proceed further.

"And you are sure he did not see you?"

"No, 'ee didn't see me," replied Franky; "'ee was too busy lookin' at somethin' else."

"What was he looking at?"

"'Ee was lookin' at the same thing that you and the doctor was lookin' at. But 'ee 'adn't got a lamp same as you 'ad and 'ee wasn't inside the church."

"Well, what then?"

"'Ee kept on lookin', for 'ow long I don't knaw, but a long time. Then 'ee turned around and I see'd 'is face. I see'd it plain 'cause the moon was shining; almost as plain as I see your face at this very minute."

"Who was it?"

"I do'ant know, sir; 'ee was a stranger. 'Twas an old man with nearly white 'air and a kind of fringe of a white beard round the lower part of 'is face."

"And you don't know who it was?"

"No, sir. First of all I thought it was the devil; but it wasn't the devil, sir."

"And is that all?"

"That's all, sir, except that 'ee waited there for I should think an hour and then 'ee went away."

"Which way?"

"I do'ant knaw, sir. I 'eard 'im go out of the churchyard and close the gate behind 'n and I do'ant know no more."

"And why do you tell me all this?"

"I do'ant ax you to tell me nothin', sir. You are a friend of the doctor's and the doctor is a friend of mine. I wouldn't do nothin' to 'arm the doctor for the world, sir. 'Ee've 'elped me out of too many scrapes, sir. But when I got back to my little 'ouse I thought it all out. I thought to myself that the doctor 'ad a reason for taking you there. What it was I do'ant know, but if the doctor 'ad a reason for being there that man might 'ave 'ad the same reason. That's why I went to the doctor's 'ouse this mornin'; but 'is sarvant said 'ee'd gone to Truro, so I came to you. I be a larned man, sir, but I be terble frightened."

"Not too frightened to keep your mouth closed, I hope?" said Gwithian after a long silence.

"You d'main talk about it, sir? You do'ant know Doctor Borlase if you think I'd talk!—No, not for worlds."

"Then why have you come to me?"

"To warn you, sir. I 'ad a feelin' that you were in danger, sir. If ever there was murder in a man's eyes there was murder in that man's eyes last night."

Gwithian took a half a crown from his pocket. "Anyhow, I am glad to make your acquaintance, Franky," he said, "and here is something to help you to remember me."

Franky looked at the half a crown with greedy eyes and put out his hand to snatch it; then he drew back.

"Do'ant tempt me, sir, do'ant tempt me! It's not that I do'ant want the half a crown. I do. But ef I had a half a crown in my pocket I couldn't keep myself from goin' to the King's Head, and then—— No, sir, do'ant tempt me, do'ant!" Whereupon Franky rushed out of the cottage as though the furies were at his heels.

CHAPTER XIX

TOO LATE!

THERE was no doubt Gwithian was startled. Making all allowances for Franky Flew's eccentricities, his visit was not without meaning. It explained several things, too. Both he and the doctor had been seriously disturbed by the sound of footsteps on the churchyard path while they were in the church together. They had remained some minutes in darkness afterwards, listening intently, but had heard nothing more. On their coming out they had, as they thought, made an examination of every nook and crevice, but had found nothing. Franky's confession had set Gwithian's mind at rest concerning this, anyhow.

But the other matter was more serious. Who was this nocturnal visitor who had stood outside the church window more than an hour? Franky had described him as an old man with white hair and a fringe of white beard. Of course, it might be all fancy, but Gwithian could not help regarding this man's visit seriously; it made him anxious. His mind flashed back over the events of the last few weeks and he saw only one explanation.

What a nuisance it was that Borlase was away! He had a feeling that every moment's delay was dangerous.

A few minutes later he was on his way to Pendragon village. He did not take his car ; he felt that he would attract less attention by walking. And he did not want to attract attention. It was eleven o'clock when he arrived there. Scarcely a soul was to be seen. A farmer's cart was standing outside the blacksmith's shop while the driver was gossiping with the blacksmith. Two women stood at a cottage door discussing the news, the children were all at school.

And yet he felt that he was being watched ; why, he did not know. The place looked deserted. He struck into a footpath which led through a meadow and which presently led to a way by which he could enter the churchyard without passing through the main gates. It was the way generally used by the Vicar, but by few others. It was not likely at that time of the day anyone would see him. Arrived at the Vicar's entrance he crept to a window of the church and looked in. He saw the spot on which he and the doctor had been standing on the previous night ; saw the slab which covered the Pendragon vault.

Everything was quiet and undisturbed.

He stood there some time gazing intently, listening carefully. Neither sight nor sound disturbed him, and yet he had the feeling that he was being watched. For the thousandth time he wished Borlase were at home ; he wanted someone with whom he could consult.

Why didn't he think of it before ? Borlase had told him that he was going to Truro for a Medical Conference. That he was going to read a paper before his confrères which would be discussed throughout the day. After that he and a number of his friends would foregather and spend the night together.

He rushed to the doctor's house and a few minutes later was talking with one of the Truro doctors.

" No, you can't speak to Borlase," someone informed him ; " he is engaged in reading a very important paper. He won't be free till one o'clock."

" But, man alive ! " cried Gwithian, " it's only half-past eleven now, and he can't be reading a paper until one o'clock ! Tell him it's important—that Gwithian Trewithen wants him."

Twenty minutes later the doctor spoke.

" Yes, what is it ? Who are you ? "

" Is that you, Borlase ? *Doctor* Borlase I mean—Doctor Borlase of *Pendragon*."

" Of course it is. What's the trouble ? "

"I am speaking from your surgery and you must come home to-night. It's Trewithen speaking."

"But why? You know I told you last night——"

"I daren't go into particulars here; but I tell you that what we decided to do must be done to-night."

"To-night! Impossible. Knowing that I was spending the day here at Truro, I arranged for several things to be done to my car. The engine is gone wrong and can't be ready until to-morrow morning. For another thing, I have promised to spend the night here."

"I don't mind what you've promised. I will meet you at nine o'clock to-night. I tell you it's imperative."

Gwithian hung up the receiver and left the doctor's house. He had acted on impulse, perhaps without sufficient reason, but he could not help himself.

He started out on his homeward walk. He walked briskly; he felt as though he wanted an escape valve for his feelings. Presently he came to the Pendragon lodge gates and stopped for a minute looking at the drive and the fine avenue of trees which overshadowed it. Nearly a mile farther on, the great Pendragon house stood—one of the finest mansions in the county. He visualized it as he looked and pictured the undulating parklands around it. He had walked miles that morning and yet he had been on the Pendragon lands practically the whole time. Then he pictured Karenza Pendragon working at the mine for a few shillings a week while all the time that woman had been battening on what should be rightfully Karenza's.

Her utter helplessness came to him. All that he and the doctor had been discussing was but the will-o'-th'-wisp of the imagination; it was all impossible, madly impossible! But he would make sure; he would leave no stone unturned to find out the truth.

He found himself walking by the side of the Pendragon boundary wall beneath the shade of large spreading trees. The road was very lonely here, not a house was in sight, woods were all around him.

The feverish desire for haste which possessed him as he left the village had now gone. The heat of the day and the closeness of the air there in the heart of the woods had robbed him of his vitality. The freshness of the springtime had gone, but the glory of the summer woods still remained. Bees were humming among the flowers while innumerable insects proclaimed the joy of life. He stepped across a stream and began to climb

a hill, but he had not gone a dozen steps before he heard the quick rustling of bushes close beside him. Then, before he had time to turn around, a thousand sparks flashed before his eyes followed by indescribable blackness. He knew what had happened, he had been struck a terrible blow from behind, and he felt his senses leaving him. He struggled to remain upright, but knew that he was staggering, falling; where, he did not know, for everything was in darkness. He was unable to think clearly, but he was conscious that if he lost his senses his plans would be frustrated. . . . In spite of the fact that his brain was reeling and that life seemed to be slipping away from him, a great determination came into his heart. He would fight this thing whatever it was and he would not lose his senses. Again and again he felt like falling, but he still struggled. It seemed to him that not only his own life but Karenza's was at stake; he simply must master his weakness, he must do it for her sake. Mad pains shot through his head. He heard, as it were, the sound of roaring waters in his ears, a sickening nausea possessed him, and the world was black. . . .

He thought he heard footsteps approaching again, stealthy, murderous footsteps. No, he would not give in. Life began to assert itself; the shock he had received was losing power, his eyesight was returning and he knew that he was turning around. This was followed by a rustling among the bushes at his side, after which was silence.

A minute later he was in possession of his faculties. After all he had only been momentarily stunned. Putting his hand to his head he felt that a great lump had risen, while his hair was stained with blood; whoever had struck him the blow meant to kill him. . . .

He heard a rumbling noise. It sounded like the noise of wheels coming towards him and with it came a sense of safety. . . . He realized that his head was bare, and looking around saw his hat lying in the ditch. It was a hard bowler and he noticed that the crown was broken. Even then he was sure that it had broken the blow and had possibly saved him from a severe concussion.

By the time the cart came up he was well-nigh recovered. Although his head ached terribly he was no longer dizzy. The awful nausea had passed away.

Yes, the driver was delighted to give him a lift, and not being a very observant man, did not notice that anything was the matter with him. A few minutes later he was back in Cromlech

Cottage. Here he did his best to remove the bloodstains and to wipe away all signs of the blow he had received.

"My word, sir, you do look pale," remarked Cradock as he came down to lunch.

"Yes, I don't feel very well."

"A touch of the sun, sir; it's very close this morning."

The sight of the lunch was revolting to him, but he had determined to get through the form of eating in order that Cradock might have no suspicion of what had happened.

"It's touched me worse than I thought, Cradock; I think I will lie down for an hour and by that time it will perhaps have passed away."

Cradock made a hundred suggestions, but evidently he had no suspicion of the truth.

"I must be better by eight o'clock," Gwithian reflected as, stretched on the couch, he tried to understand the meaning of what had happened to him. "I must be well enough to drive to Truro."

More than once during the afternoon he almost gave up hope of being able to do this. His head burnt like a furnace, his pulses throbbed madly, and again and again he felt as though he were losing consciousness.

At half-past seven he got out his car and prepared to drive to Truro.

How he got there remains a mystery to him even to this day. The road seemed strange to him, although he had gone over it half a dozen times within the last few weeks. He drove by instinct rather than by reason. He passed through towns without being aware of it, he only knew that he must get to Doctor Borlase. . . .

He was startled by hearing his own name.

"Hello, Trewithen. What's up?" It was Doctor Borlase who spoke to him. "What's the matter, man?"

Gwithian looked around him bewildered.

"It's you, Borlase? Thank God!"

The doctor looked at him steadily. This was not the man from whom he had parted the previous night. It was but the apology for the Gwithian Trewithen he had known for the last few weeks.

"What is it?" asked the doctor anxiously. "You are not fit to be here."

"Give me something, Borlase," he gasped; "something to buck me up. I have had an accident and—and I thought I

should never get here. I shall be better presently. I will tell you about it then ;—but make haste, there is no time to spare."

Doctor Borlase was a man of quick intuitions, of rapid thought. He did not ask unnecessary questions or make foolish remarks, but leaving him for a few minutes he went into the station.

"There, drink that," he said on his return, "drink it all."

Gwithian obeyed.

"Better now?"

"Yes, I am better. But you must drive this thing home. I will tell you all about it on the way."

A few minutes later they were moving in the direction of Pendragon, the doctor driving and Gwithian seated by his side.

"I am listening," said the doctor presently, still keeping his eyes steadily on the radiator.

Gwithian told him of the happenings of the day.

"It may be I did wrong in telephoning for you," he concluded ; "but I couldn't help it."

"And after telephoning, as you were making your way back to Cromlech Cottage, was this—happening?"

"Yes."

The doctor stopped the car.

"Let's have a look at it," he said.

The light was fading, but there was sufficient for the doctor's purpose. With a steady, skilled hand he passed his fingers over Gwithian's head. He gave a grunt of satisfaction.

"It's a good job you've got a thick skull, my lad," he said grimly. "A good job, too, that you wore a hard hat. As it is there's nothing serious. You've had a nasty shock. The fellow, whoever he was, meant to do for you. You didn't see him, of course?"

"No, I only put two and two together. That was why, although I could scarcely hold the wheel, I determined to get to Truro. I felt there was no time to waste. Even now——"

"No," broke in the doctor, "we can't be too late, and yet—— We'll give him a run for his money anyhow."

He pressed the accelerator and the car simply flew over the road. Less than an hour later they were at Cromlech Cottage.

"How do you feel now?" asked the doctor.

"As right as rain."

"I am going to have another look at you."

"I tell you I am all right," said Gwithian impatiently. "The things are all ready. Let's get away."

"As it happens," went on Borlase as though Gwithian hadn't

spoken, "I always carry a few things with me. No one ever knows what may happen. Come here," and he drew him towards the light. "Yes, the fellow meant to do for you, there's no doubt about that. I fancy, however, he was disturbed by the sound of that farmer's cart. That saved you from a second blow."

He took some bottles from his pocket and carefully prepared several ingredients.

"Have you ever heard of the Elixir of Life, Trewithen? This is it. It's my own discovery. You will be all right in a minute from now. Drink it, drink it every drop."

He watched while the colour came back into Gwithian's face and the sparkle into his eyes.

"Feel better?"

"I am like a new man."

"Of course you are. It's wonderful stuff and its effects remain for several hours. Now we must have ten minutes of quiet talk; there are several questions I want to ask you."

"Yes, whatever is done must be done at once," remarked the doctor after they had been conversing for some time. "Of course, what has happened to-day may not mean anything; but on the other hand it may. If I'd known—but there, I didn't."

They left the cottage and made their way toward the gate where the car was standing.

It was now nearly eleven o'clock and the night was dark. Great black clouds hung in the sky and they heard the sound of distant thunder.

"I thought that sultry heat meant this," muttered the doctor as he took his place at the wheel. "Evidently a storm is brewing. How do you feel? Nerves steady?"

"Steady as Old Time," was the reply.

"I wish mine were; I am as nervous as a kitten. Heavens, it's a ghastly job."

Gwithian did not reply; nevertheless, he felt that the future of his life depended on what would take place during the next few hours.

They crossed the little stream of water close to Cromlech Cottage and made their way toward the Pendragon woods.

"This was the place," said Gwithian presently.

The doctor stopped the car as if he were glad of an excuse for delaying.

"You mean you received the blow here?"

"Just near here. I thought I was done for, but thanks to

you I never felt better. That stuff has worked a miracle. What are you waiting for?"

A storm was nearing. A flash of lightning lit up the sky, which was immediately followed by a loud clap of thunder. Some drops of rain splashed against the windscreen.

"Go on," said Gwithian impatiently.

"I can't, I simply can't," stammered the doctor, and his hands dropped nervously from the steering wheel.

"Nonsense! Get out of the way, I'll drive myself."

"I am in a blue funk, Trewithen. . . . Besides, there is no truth in all this yarn. Do you know what we are undertaking? It's sacrilege, sacrilege, man, and I am not going any further!"

"You mean to say you are going to play the coward?"

"Coward!" cried the doctor, who had evidently lost his nerve. "Curse you, how dare you call me a coward? I never boasted about it, but I was two years in France during the war. I have been up in No-man's land while machine guns were pepping and poison gas was creeping along the ground, and you dare to call me a coward!"

"Steady, old man. What are you talking about?"

A flash of lightning more vivid than the first lit up the sky while the thunder followed more quickly.

"It's God Almighty forbidding us to go on with this devilish business," cried the doctor excitedly. "Oh yes, call me what names you like! I am no more a coward than you; but this isn't human, isn't *natural*. . . . Fancy going into a dark church at midnight! Fancy opening a vault where the best friend you ever had was put ten years ago! And what for? I can't do it, man! I simply *can't*."

"You've *got* to do it," said Gwithian grimly. "We're not kids, man; we're two grown men."

"Yes, but I can't—I can't! Fancy opening a vault! Fancy unscrewing a *coffin*! Besides—— Oh no, it's too horrible! Of course, my friend did wrong; he did not do right when he disinherited his own children because of that she-devil—but we can't help it now."

"You know he didn't disinherit his children, he couldn't do it! And do you mean to say that from pure cowardice you would let that woman batten on a great black lie while that poor girl is working at the mine for a few shillings a week?"

"What girl?" cried the doctor. "What are you talking about?"

Perhaps it was the effect of the storm, perhaps Gwithian had been affected more by the events of the day than he knew, perhaps the thought of what they had in their minds was working upon his nerves; but at that moment he forgot all about his promise to Karenza, forgot everything except the danger which he felt sure threatened everything dear to him.

"Girl!" he cried. "Why, Karenza Pendragon! She and her brother Roger are at St. Elizabeth at this moment. Roger is half idiot, half mad, made so by the war, while the girl Karenza works at St. Elizabeth, works for pittance, scarcely enough to keep body and soul together. But it's all she has to keep her brother from starving; and yet you talk this rot."

"But I—I don't understand," gasped the doctor.

"No, you don't understand, and I promised not to tell; but I forgot!"

"And have you seen her?"

"Seen her? Seen her? Of course I have. She's eating out her heart in misery, and working like a navvy. Are you going to drive or am I?"

"I will drive," replied the doctor. "I didn't know—— But you are right, Trewithen."

The rain began to beat more heavily, but neither took any notice of it. The car rushed on between the dark woods, passed by the Pendragon gates, and presently they saw the first house of the village.

"I will put the car in my garage," said the doctor quietly. "My housekeeper will have gone to bed, but that doesn't matter; I've got the keys."

There was not a light to be seen. To all appearances every cottager was abed; the village was asleep.

"Let's go into the house," said the doctor after he had put up the car. "Let's have a peg of whisky. I have had a hard day," and he turned as if to go to his own door.

"No, you don't!" cried Gwithian, grasping his arm; "there is no time to waste, man!"

They made their way towards the church gates.

Suddenly the storm broke in terrific violence. Another flash of lightning, more vivid than any previous one, lit up the open space on which they stood, revealing the grey old church and the great trees which grew around it; this was immediately followed by a deafening clap of thunder.

"That's Franky Flew's cottage," remarked the doctor as they reached the gate.

"Yes, I see, but it's in darkness. I expect he's gone to bed."

They entered the gates and passed down the churchyard path.

"Got the things?" whispered the doctor.

"Everything is in this bag."

"Awfully dark, isn't it?"

"Yes; it's this storm; and the moon doesn't rise till midnight."

"Trewithen," said the doctor, "I confess it; I am a coward. I daren't do it. You must go with me."

"Of course I am going with you. What are you talking about?"

"The key, man! the key! I daren't go by myself to the other side of the tower."

Another flash of lightning lit up the sky, followed by the inevitable thunder. There was no wind, but the rain began to fall more heavily.

"Everything is in darkness," muttered the doctor. "Fancy being in this ghastly place on such a night as this!"

The two men went together toward the spot where Franky hid the church key.

"It's not there!" gasped the doctor.

"Are you sure?"

"Certain."

"It was not there at midday." Gwithian tried to speak calmly, but could not. His brain was reeling. The wild horror of the night was becoming too much for him.

"Perhaps the church door is unlocked. One never knows."

A minute later they reached the porch and in the darkness found the door opening into the church.

"It's partly open!" whispered the doctor. "What does it mean?"

The church was in utter darkness; not a ray of light was to be seen anywhere, and yet Gwithian felt that they were not alone. Living presences were near him; who or what they were he did not know.

He flashed his electric light along the aisle and made his way toward the Communion, while the doctor followed at his heels. The little lamp threw a circle of light around them, but this only intensified the darkness beyond. Each heard the patter of rain as it fell upon the roof, but beyond that there was no sound. For the time at all events the thunder had ceased.

A few seconds later both men stopped aghast. The stone which covered the grave of Roger Pendragon was thrown back; the vault itself stood open.

"You were right, Trewithen, we are too late!" was the doctor's hoarse whisper.

Gwithian did not speak; at that moment words refused to come. For a few seconds he stood still like one transfixed. A musty sickening smell came from the grave; evidently it was but newly opened.

CHAPTER XX

THE WILL OF ROGER PENDRAGON

FOR more than a minute the two men stood by the open vault. Both were stunned, bewildered, helpless. What Gwithian had dreaded for hours had come to pass—someone had forestalled him.

At all events his imaginings had not been without foundation; his dreams or whatever they had been had a meaning. He had been watched, too; doubtless his every movement had been noted. He knew now why he had been attacked that morning, why the murderous blow had been struck. Someone had anticipated his purpose and been before him.

"Who had done it?"

There was but one answer.

Adam Chignoweth.

The thought stirred Gwithian to mad anger and before Borlase knew what he was doing he was clambering down into the vault. All thought of fear had fled. The sacrilege, if sacrilege it were, had no meaning to him; the horror of visiting the home of the dead had all gone. Everything was swallowed up in the thought of his defeat. The open vault told its own story. Something had been buried with the body of Roger Pendragon, something that would have explained everything, and perhaps have done justice to those who had been defrauded. And the man who had done this and who knew the whole truth was Adam Chignoweth. The man's fears had been aroused by his own visit to Fowey, and ever since he had been making his preparations.

All this flashed through Gwithian's mind with the quickness of light. The thing he had feared while on his way to Truro had come to pass.

He flashed his little electric lamp around the vault, and saw signs of disturbance everywhere. The cover of the coffin on which was Roger Pendragon's name had been removed. The coffin itself lay on a kind of shelf by the side of the vault. There was no suggestion of any document.

Suddenly a great fear overtook him and he climbed out of the vault like a man possessed. A few seconds later he stood by the doctor's side again.

"It's gone!" he said in a hoarse whisper.

"What's gone?"

"Everything. There's nothing there."

"Of course there wouldn't be," said the doctor grimly. "If anything were placed there ten years ago it must have been dust long years since."

"That won't do," cried Gwithian. His mind was alert and clear now, and he saw every issue plainly.

"But it must be, man. How can you go against the laws of nature? You expected to find the will, didn't you? The real will? Under such conditions it would have rotted—become dust."

"Then why did Chignoweth open the grave? No, no, there must have been something."

Outside the rain still fell; each could hear it pattering upon the roof above them, and against the windows at their side. There was but little wind, but the air was full of electricity. Even in the old church the night was hot and stifling.

Both men gave a fearful start. Near them, it could not have been more than fifty yards away, they heard a fearful shriek followed by a hoarse cry.

"Great God! What was that?" asked the doctor, but Gwithian did not try to reply.

Leaving the doctor he fled across the church, passed the pulpit, and rushed into the vestry. The place was empty, but the vestry door was open. This door opened into a path which led to the Vicarage.

Gwithian rushed out into the night. The sky above him was as black as ink, the rain was falling heavily. He listened, but could hear nothing.

"Curse the noise of that rain," he muttered fiercely; "it drowns everything." But he stood still listening with strained ears. Then above the noise caused by the falling rain he heard gurgling sounds, a choking cry, a savage growl. He was sure it was near by; it did not seem twenty yards away. He flashed his lamp around, but it only caused a small circle of light, just a few feet in diameter. Beyond this the night was black as ink.

Another vivid flash of lightning which was so closely followed by a thunder-clap that they might have been said to be simultaneous. The light lasted only a second, but during that second it was as light as day. The old church was clearly outlined,

every gravestone was visible. Close to the church, near a buttress which supported the wall, he saw two figures struggling, a man and a woman.

A few steps and he had reached them. He heard gasping pants, hoarse mutterings.

"You she-devil! Give it me, give it me! I will murder you if you don't! There, you—I have got you now!"

There was no reply to this save a low moan. A moment later Gwithian had the man in a grip of iron.

The man struggled, but vainly. There seemed no limit to Gwithian's strength at that moment.

"My God! Who are you?" gasped the man. "Let me go! I haven't got it! I swear I haven't got it."

Gwithian did not reply. His eyes were cast towards the spot where he thought the woman was lying. For he knew who it was. In the vivid flash of light he had seen the face of Karenza Pendragon. He had heard her moan of agony, too, and a great dread came into his heart lest the man had killed her. While not daring to let him go he still listened breathlessly for some sound from her.

His lamp had fallen to the ground and lay on a grass-grown grave; but it still burnt, and threw a faint gleam of light for a yard or so around.

The man struggled again.

"Let me go," he whimpered. "I haven't got it! I swear I haven't got it."

"Be quiet, Adam Chignoweth," said Gwithian grimly. He was in no mood for many words.

"Where are you, Trewithen?" It was Doctor Borlase who spoke. He was standing outside the vestry door.

"Come here! quick!"

"What is it?" asked the doctor as he stumbled his way over the graves.

"She's lying there near the wall. Take my lamp and then you will see. Better still, hold this fellow—that's it—hold him tight. Have you got him? There, hold him fast. If he get's away I'll murder you!"

He did not know what he was saying. His overstrained nerves, his almost frenzied excitement, had well-nigh bereft him of his reason. But the doctor obeyed; he understood.

Relieved of his hold upon the man, he seized the lamp and flashed its light upon the girl. She was lying almost unconscious although her eyes were wide open, and she was breathing with

difficulty. In her tightly closed hands she held something, something that was bent and twisted; but she held it so closely that it might have almost been a part of herself.

Without a word Gwithian placed his arms around her and lifted her.

"Bring him into the vestry, Borlase," he said. He had become calmer by this time, and spoke coherently. "I will carry her."

A minute later the strange quartette found their way into a shelter. From their rain-sodden garments pools of water fell, but neither was cognizant of it. Gwithian felt around in the vestry for the Vicar's chair, where he laid his burden.

"Got him, Borlase?"

"Yes, I have got him," and there was that in the doctor's voice which told how he was wrought upon.

A minute later Gwithian had managed to light the vestry lamp.

"Are you better, Karenza? You are not ill, are you?"

At first there was a look of terror in her eyes, but when she saw his face it passed away. Then she looked at her hands. They still held the twisted something for which she had been struggling. She nodded, but did not speak. It was evident, however, that she no longer felt any fear.

Never before had there been such a gathering in the Vicar's vestry, never in all probability will there be such another. Still reclining in the Vicar's chair was Karenza Pendragon, pale as death yet with a look of determination, and more than determination in her eyes. Her hands were bruised and bleeding, while there was more than one streak of blood on her face. She seemed to be watching and waiting for what would happen next. Near the door which led to the church stood Doctor Borlase, while crumpled and almost lying at his feet, half sat half lay, the cringing figure of Adam Chignoweth. The old man was in a pitiable condition. He too was bruised and bleeding. His clothes were torn and soaked with rain, while in his eyes was a look of terror. Even yet he did not appear fully to understand what had taken place. Near Karenza stood Gwithian, outwardly calm, but with fast-beating heart, and excited beyond measure by the happenings of the night.

"Now then, Adam, we will hear what you have to say," he said to the prostrate man quietly.

"I have nothing to say! I have done nothing! Why have you dragged me here?"

Gwithian laughed quietly.

"It's no use your trying to bluff it, Adam; and it will do

you no good to deny the truth. You had better make a clean breast of it."

The man looked so abject, so utterly beaten and cowed, that even Gwithian had a feeling of pity for him. But the pity was quickly followed by another feeling. The man attempted to struggle and to get away from the doctor's grip, while his eyes were turned towards Karenza.

"Who is *she*?" he gasped. "Everything would have come out right but for her! She fought like a wild-cat. She—she—destroyed everything."

"This young lady," replied Gwithian, "is Miss Karenza Pendragon. The knowledge of that fact will doubtless explain many things."

"Karenza Pendragon! Then—then—then——"

"Yes, go on," said Gwithian. "You remember our meeting at Fowey, don't you?"

"Yes, I—I see now. It was *you*!"

"Yes, it was I. You would tell me nothing then, so naturally I found out things without you. That's why we are here to-night."

"But how could you find out? There was nothing to find out," he added tamely.

"We'll come to that presently. You see," and there was a taunt in Gwithian's voice—he had begun almost to enjoy himself by this time—"I did not believe that Roger Pendragon made a will leaving everything to his widow and nothing to his children."

"But *you*! What have *you* to do with it? How have *you* come to be mixed up with it?"

"My friend Doctor Borlase here was at the reading of the will. Even then he had doubts about it. He's had doubts ever since. The fact that old Lawyer Trefry had a paralytic stroke that night was very awkward; still, truth always comes to light. Adam Chignoweth, why did you forge the will which so upset your old master?"

"How did you know I forged it? It's a lie! of course I didn't forge it," and the man looked fearfully from one to the other.

"Come now," said Gwithian, "the truth will have to come out, and it may be that we shall be able to make it easier for you when the whole case is tried in a Court of Law if you tell us now."

"Court of Law! No, no—not that! Spare me that!"

"Of course, it will have to be tried in a Court of Law. Do you think that such a thing as this can be hushed up? Why, man, we have caught you red-handed."

"It was not my fault! I swear before God it was not my fault. I pleaded and pleaded, but that she-devil had me in her grip."

"Come now, that's scarcely polite. All the same, it would be interesting to know whom you mean by that title."

Adam Chignoweth looked around and glanced at one face after another. Evidently his true character began to assert itself. His eyes grew harder, his lips tightened.

"I have nothing to say," he replied, "except that you will have to account for this brutal outrage."

"We shall see," replied Gwithian quietly. "In any case, the explanation will be exciting, won't it?" Then, turning to Karenza, he said, "What are you holding so tightly, Miss Pendragon?"

The girl, who had not yet spoken, looked at him steadily before replying. Even yet she was in a state of bewilderment, and at that moment scarcely realized where she was, or what had taken place.

"I watched him," she whispered, "watched him come into the church, watched him while he loosed the stone over my father's grave, saw him roll it back, and heard him muttering to himself all the time. Oh! it was awful. I could hardly keep myself from crying out. But I kept silent, and from behind a pillar I saw everything without being seen. You see, he had a lamp. Oh! don't ask me to tell you any more. It was so terrible."

"I wouldn't ask you to tell us anything," replied Gwithian, "but it is better that we should know. This is Doctor Borlase, who has been your friend for years, and I think you are sure I am only anxious to serve you."

"Yes, yes," replied the girl. "I know you have been good to me, but I can hardly believe it even now. It is so like a horrible dream, and yet it's so real, isn't it? I have got it here. He nearly broke my arm—but I held it fast."

She spoke in painful gasps, while every look, every tone, manifested her suffering.

"Yes, I'll tell you," she went on; "it is to you I owe everything, and without you he would have got it—but he didn't. I thought I was going mad, it was like desecration—how could it help being——? He began to unscrew the coffin and I watched

him as he took off the cover and placed it by the side of the vault. Oh-h-h !—I wonder how I bore it ! "

"It must have been terrible for you, Miss Karenza," said Gwithian. He was scarcely less moved than she, but he tried to speak in tones of confidence and to give her help.

"It was awful—terrible ! I knew that he was in league with that woman. That was why I determined to keep near him. I saw him looking into the coffin and I heard him give a gloating cry as he took out *this* ! I heard him muttering too. I heard him say, 'There, I've got it ! ' Then I think I must have made a noise, for he looked around fearfully, and holding it tightly in his hand he climbed out of the grave."

Gwithian heard the doctor muttering, and looking toward him he saw a wild light in his eyes, but he did not loose his grip on Adam Chignoweth.

"Yes, and then ? " Gwithian encouraged her.

"I felt sure of what it was," went on the girl; "I knew it was something of my father's. . . . He had not seen me, and I don't think he thought of my being there. That was why I was able to get it so easily. But oh ! it was terrible ! "

"Yes, I am sure it was; and you are very brave."

"I thought of my father—and of Roger; that was why I snatched it from him and rushed away into the darkness."

"Then what did he do ? "

"He gave a horrible cry; oh, such a horrible cry ! and I am sure he was afraid. . . . Then I heard him coming after me, and I fled through this vestry, and went out of that door into the night. But I couldn't see anything, and I was afraid of the thunder and the lightning. I was stumbling over the graves, too, and I didn't know where I was going. I think I must have cried out when I fell down, for I heard him coming nearer to me."

"Yes, and then ? "

"I think I should have got away, but a vivid flash of lightning came, and he must have seen me. After that I could do nothing but fight him, and to hold this fast," and again she looked at what she held in her hands. "After that I don't think I remember anything more except that I held it fast until you came."

"Will you let me look at it ? "

For a moment the girl hesitated, then she handed it to him.

"I dare you to touch that ! " broke in Adam Chignoweth. "It's mine—*mine, I tell you* ! "

He struggled to free himself from Doctor Borlase's grasp as he spoke, but in vain.

It was a round metal case of perhaps fifteen inches long and two inches in diameter; but it had been bent almost to a double and much twisted.

"She fought like a wild-cat," Gwithian heard Adam Chignoweth say, "just a minute more and I would have had it; I didn't know a woman could be so strong."

It was with difficulty, strong as he was, that Gwithian straightened out the case. He recognized it as a holder similar to that which is often used by solicitors for placing documents that they desire to be taken special care of. It was made of tin, or some similar metal, which had not perished or even corroded through the years. It was wrapped in a kind of oilskin and was sealed at each end.

"May I open it, examine it?" asked Gwithian.

"Please do."

"It's unlawful! it's punishable by law to do such a thing," cried Adam Chignoweth, who again struggled to escape the doctor's grasp; but almost before he had finished speaking Gwithian had unfastened the case and had taken from it a legal-looking document. A few minutes later he was holding it close to the lamp.

"The Last Will and Testament of Roger Pendragon of Pendragon Hall," he read. "We were right after all, Borlase," he said as he continued reading. "This is your friend's true will. The one read after the funeral was bogus."

"Prove it!" cried Adam Chignoweth again.

"Yes, we will prove it," replied Gwithian grimly, "and the proof will mean your imprisonment."

"No, no, not that," wailed Adam. "I will confess everything! I will give everything I possess! but not prison—not trial. No, no, save me from that."

"I don't see why we should," replied Gwithian quietly, "and as far as I can judge you will make a very interesting prisoner. Borlase, you are a magistrate, aren't you? We will go back to your house, where you shall sign a warrant for this man's arrest. After that we will wake up the village constable——"

"For God's sake—no," cried Adam. "It wasn't I. As I told you, that woman held me body and soul. She found out things about me and threatened me."

"What woman?"

"Why, the woman who lives up at the Hall—Mrs. Pendragon. It was she, I tell you! Otherwise I should never have thought of it."

"In that case," went on the young man, "our best plan will be to take you up to the Hall and confront her with what's happened."

"No, no! Save me from that! I would rather go to prison than be left alone with her. She's terrible, I tell you, terrible."

There was a frenzy of fear in his voice and he hardly knew what he was saying. Not only the fact that he had been discovered and that his plans had come to nothing had wrought upon his nerves, but the whole events of the night had so told upon him that he was more mad than sane. For that matter Karenza was calmer than any of the others. Girl though she was, and suffering what she had suffered, she was in a less excited condition than either Gwithian or the doctor.

"I must go back to Roger now," she said, moving from the chair. "Will you give me my father's will, please? Roger will wonder where I am."

Gwithian handed her back the document without protest.

"Keep it safely, Miss Pendragon," he said; "a great deal depends on that."

For the moment his mind was a blank, and he scarcely knew what he ought to do next.

But the girl drew back her hand at the moment Gwithian handed it to her.

"No, no, you keep it. I had forgotten—and I am afraid. Oh, you are so kind to me. You will continue to be kind, won't you? I—I must go back to Roger."

"What, to St. Elizabeth?" asked the doctor, who up to now had been silent.

"Yes, to Dorcas Udy's cottage."

"You can't, my child," he replied; "you are not fit. There, don't you see? you can't stand"; for the girl, who had risen, fell heavily back to the chair again.

"I shall be able to after I have rested a little," she stammered. "I am quite strong; I really am; only I am a little faint now."

"When did you have any food last?" asked the doctor.

"I don't know. Not for a long time, I think."

The doctor took the lead of the proceedings now; he was in his own domain. "The girl is ill, Trewithen," he said. "You must carry her to my house. As for this fellow, I will look after him."

A few minutes later a curious procession walked through the churchyard. The doctor was dragging along the struggling form of Adam Chignoweth, while Gwithian carried Karenza.

"What shall we do about the open grave?" he said as he reached the door of his own house. "This will mean a terrible row unless we are careful."

"We shall have to take Moss into our confidence," Gwithian whispered. "In fact, I see curious things confronting us. All this business needs careful thought."

"By Jove! it does."

The doctor opened his door as he spoke and led the way into his surgery. "The girl is in a half-fainting condition," he went on. "She had better lie on the sofa, and you must look after this fellow."

For several minutes after this Gwithian was left alone with Adam Chignoweth and Karenza Pendragon.

The effects of the doctor's Elixir of Life were by this time passing away, terrible pains were coming back to his head again, and he felt giddy. Karenza was lying in a half-unconscious condition on the sofa, while Adam Chignoweth eyed him eagerly and anxiously as if wondering what the next move would be.

Minute after minute passed in silence, save for the ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece. Gwithian was wishing that the doctor would return. The pains in his head were increasing in violence, while the faintness from which he had suffered previously began to grow on him. He knew that the unnatural strength which for hours had buoyed him up was nearly gone, and he was afraid lest Adam Chignoweth, who was watching him with intense eagerness, knew of it. Unable to stand any longer, he threw himself in an arm-chair which stood near the door; he knew that his senses were leaving him.

CHAPTER XXI

ADAM CHIGNOWETH'S STORY

"BE careful, Mr. Trewithen! Look, he's coming!"

The agony in Karenza's voice awoke Gwithian to a realization of his danger. Looking, he saw Adam Chignoweth creeping toward him with murder in his eyes. Perhaps at that moment he felt that after all the game was not played out.

And yet it was, as far as he was concerned. Before Gwithian could rise to his feet to defend himself, as well as the precious document which lay under his coat, Doctor Borlase opened the door and Adam crept back like a whipped dog.

"I have been speaking to my housekeeper," said the doctor quietly. "She will be here in a few minutes with refreshments.

I have also roused up Seccombe, my man-of-all-work, who also will be here in a few minutes. Then we shall be in a position to act."

Adam Chignoweth listened attentively to every word. The look in his eyes proclaimed the fact that he was still scheming.

"What is the matter with you, Trewithen?" added the doctor, looking scrutinizingly at the young man.

"I am afraid I am nearly done for," replied Gwithian. "My head is swimming, and I can't think clearly."

"No wonder," muttered the doctor, going to a cupboard at the side of the room. "Here, take these"; and he handed to him two tabloids. "They will help you till Mrs. Richards comes with some food."

"By Jove!" cried Gwithian two minutes later, "but you are a wizard! I feel myself again."

The doctor laughed grimly.

"You are not going to die this week," he replied, "unless someone tries to murder you again," and he looked toward Adam as he spoke. "You tried to murder Mr. Trewithen this morning and you will have to answer for it."

"You are mistaken, Doctor," whined Adam. "I know nothing about any murder. Don't accuse me of *that*!"

"You will have a big bill to pay, my man," replied the doctor. "Thank you, Mrs. Richards. Will you put the things down there?" he added, turning to a motherly-looking old woman who appeared bearing a tray.

Mrs. Richards gave a quick glance around the room, but uttered no word. Whether the doctor had told her anything I do not know, but she appeared to comprehend the whole situation at a glance.

"I am going to begin with you, Miss Pendragon," said the doctor, handing her a glass. "There, drink this; drink it all. Heaven knows you need it. It's a mystery to me how you've gone through it so well."

A few minutes later the little party had eaten and drunk. Even Adam Chignoweth had been provided with refreshments, the doctor remarking as he gave him food that even murderers were given a good breakfast prior to hanging.

"Now," continued the doctor presently, "I think we are ready for explanations, and first of all I would like to congratulate you, Miss Pendragon, on what you have done to-night. How you managed it is beyond me; but you have been wonderful, simply wonderful."

"Have I?" asked the girl simply. "I have done nothing. I only——" And there came a far-away look into her eyes as if she were trying to recall something.

"You are sure you are well enough to talk?" and the doctor looked at her anxiously.

"Oh yes, I am quite well now, thanks to you. But I ought to get back to Roger; he may be anxious."

"We will talk about that presently; in the meanwhile I should like to know how you have managed—all this. What led you to follow that man into the church?"

"I am afraid I have acted the eavesdropper," she said with a smile; "but I felt as though I could not help myself. On Saturday night after——" She stopped suddenly like one confused. "I was terribly excited," she added. "I felt something was going to happen."

The doctor did not speak, but he looked at her scrutinizingly. Then he turned toward Gwithian. Perhaps he called to mind certain things which Gwithian had told him, and remembered his confusion at certain omissions in his narrative. But he was an understanding man and did not ask awkward questions.

"Naturally you were excited," he said. "You had reason to be. Perhaps you suspected something?"

"Yes," and she caught eagerly at the opening his words gave her, "and last night I went to Cromlech Cottage."

"Last night?" queried the doctor.

"Yes, it was Sunday night last night, wasn't it? When I got there I saw a light in the house; but I didn't go in. When I heard voices inside I was afraid to knock, but I listened. I know it was wrong, but I heard you and Mr. Trewithen talking about Pendragon Hall. You are not angry, are you?" and she turned toward Gwithian wistfully.

"Angry!" replied Gwithian. "Why should I be?"

"I have not been myself for days," went on the girl. "I have been so sure that something was going to happen, that I could not help myself, try as I might. That was why, when you left the house, I followed you. I was afraid you would hear me.—Did you? I took great care."

"No, we heard nothing. I wish you had spoken: it might have helped us."

"I daren't do that; I was too frightened. Besides, I didn't hear much—just odd, disconnected sentences. But I watched you go into the church, watched and waited. I saw you flash the light on my father's grave, and I began to put things together

—tried to understand. But I kept quiet. I saw the village sexton, too, and I was sure he had his suspicions. Then after you had gone that man came, and I saw him looking through the window in the direction of my father's grave. I had seen him before—I remembered that he was one of the witnesses to my father's will."

She spoke quietly, but with evident difficulty. At that moment she appeared to have forgotten that she had an audience, and was like one trying to visualize what she had seen.

"I followed him," she continued. "He stayed at the church a long while, but when he went away I followed him until he came to the Pendragon lodge gates, and then went up the drive. I knew then where he was going."

"And after that?" asked the doctor quietly.

"After that I went back to Roger. I haven't been to the mine to-day—I couldn't, I was too excited. You see, I remembered what you said."

Question followed question after that, the girl answering clearly and quietly, making what had hitherto been obscure plain.

When she had finished Adam Chignoweth, who had listened as eagerly as a hunting-dog during the whole recital, burst into a half-angry, half-admiring exclamation.

"What a brain! what insight!" he gasped. "No wonder I failed. But who would have thought that a chit of a girl like that would have beaten me?"

"She's her father's child; that's why," Doctor Borlase reminded him.

"Her father's child!" sneered the other. "No Pendragon I ever came across before had brains like that. Why, the girl must have been a sleuth-hound; she must have had eyes like a lynx!"

"Now we'll have your story," said the doctor, turning to him.

"My story? I have nothing to tell—beyond what you know."

"There's a great deal to tell."

"But I can't. I am worn out. I am an old man, and I am feeling very ill. What are you going to do with me? You will give me a bed, won't you? I am very tired and faint"; but in spite of the whine in his voice he looked cunningly from one to another.

"There are many things you will have to tell us," said the doctor sternly. "Remember, I was at the reading of the false will, the will you forged."

"I forged no will; it's—it's all conjecture on your part. It really is, Doctor. Besides, you can't prove anything."

"Tell us," repeated the doctor sternly.

"You can't make me speak," Adam defied him. "Do your worst; I don't care. No power on earth shall make me tell more than I have been fool enough to tell already."

Evidently Adam had been busy scheming while Karenza was telling her story, and perhaps fresh courage had been given to him by the food and drink with which the doctor had provided him.

"I will tell nothing! nothing!" he persisted. "How can I? I have nothing to tell." There was a hard look in his eyes, and his lips were tightly compressed. Evidently Adam meant to fight to the last.

"You persist in that?"—and Gwithian looked at him steadily.

"Of course I persist in it. I have nothing to say. Besides, you've got what you wanted, haven't you?" And he pointed to the will which Gwithian had been reading. "A lot of good it will do you," and he gave a sneering laugh; "but you've got it, for all it's worth."

"Yes, we've got it," replied Gwithian. "We've got it from you. You broke open the grave in order to steal it. That's a very serious offence, Adam; it means penal servitude for life, even if there were nothing else against you."

"You daren't make it known!" snarled the old man. "Come to that, you are as deep in it as I am. Why were *you* there? Why did you break into the church with your bag of tools? Come now, you can't get over me."

"So you are going to fight it out, are you?"

"If you drive me to it—yes."

"That's settled, then. Have you got a warrant handy, Borlase? Yes, I see you have.—And Seccombe is in the kitchen, isn't he?"

The doctor nodded. He seemed relieved that Gwithian had taken the matter in hand.

"Then sign a warrant for Adam Chignoweth's arrest right away, and send Seccombe at once to the village constable."

"You won't do it! You *daren't* do it!"

For reply the doctor took a piece of blue paper headed with the British coat of arms from a desk by his side.

"You won't do it! you *daren't* do it!" persisted the old man. "Besides, I'd nothing to do with it, I will swear I hadn't."

The doctor began to fill up the form. "Name: Adam Chignoweth. Date: August 30, 192–. Place: Pendragon, Cornwall."

"But you don't mean it! This is only bluff," he persisted, turning toward Gwithian again.

"Unless you tell everything, you will be in the lock-up within an hour from now," the young man threatened him sternly.

"But it would be *murder*! I am old, and I am cold, and I am—wet. Can't you see how I am shivering?" and every word was a sob.

"Are you ready, Borlase?" asked Gwithian without seeming to notice him. "Then I will ring for Seccombe right away."

"No, no! not yet!—not yet! Wait a minute. I am not going to tell you anything except on my own conditions."

"What are they?"

"That you give me a week to clear out of the country before you take any steps."

"Not an hour," replied Gwithian. "If you do not tell us everything, *everything*, mark you, you will be arrested at once."

"And if I do tell you—you will give me my liberty, won't you?"

"We promise you nothing. Perhaps—I don't know—but this young lady may be disposed to be merciful; but you must tell everything; *everything*, mind you. Otherwise the law must take its course. And we have a long account against you, Adam."

"It would be cruel, cruel," the old man cried. "Why, I am nearly seventy; I should die in a month, and what good would that do you? Besides, you'd have murder on your consciences. Think of that."

Gwithian took out his watch. "I will give you one minute to decide, Adam," he said.

"And what if I promise to tell?" snarled the old man. "What will you do to me? Miss Pendragon, you will be merciful, won't you? I never meant *you* any harm. I served your father for years and years, and many a kind word he has spoken to me. You'll make it easy for me, won't you?"

"Half a minute more," said Gwithian quietly; "the moments are flying, Adam."

The old man kept looking at Karenza, who did not speak, but there was a kind of horror in her eyes as she returned his gaze.

"Time's up," said Gwithian, putting his hand to the bell.

"Stop! I'll—tell! I don't know much, but I'll tell you what I know. What is it you want?"

"First of all, why did you forge that false will?"

Adam laughed; a low, cunning laugh. "Neither of you is a married man, I am told," he replied; "therefore you don't

know what women can be. But you've both of you seen that she-devil. How pleasant she can be, can't she? But she's as cruel as hell. No sooner had she caught Roger Pendragon in her net than she began to scheme. You know to what purpose. But one thing she couldn't do: she couldn't persuade him to make a will after her own heart. He was just to her—generous for that matter, and left her a handsome annuity in the case of his dying before her. Then she got hold of me. I was old Lawyer Trefry's confidential clerk, and did most of his work. He had been failing for years before Roger Pendragon died. And I knew him—knew him inside out. I told you, didn't I, that she got to know things about me, and got me in her grip? I needn't tell you what they were, but she had. You know what happened. When the will was read at the funeral everything was left to her, the children weren't mentioned."

By this time Karenza was eagerly alert, listening to every word, while the doctor and Gwithian, scarcely less excited, forgot everything in Adam's recital.

"That was the thing that set me doubting," ejaculated the doctor. "Knowing Roger Pendragon as I did, I could not believe that he would forget his own children."

"Hadn't I thought of that, too?" replied Adam craftily. "I told her so, but she was adamant. She was as cunning as the devil, and as greedy as a mongrel dog. She wanted everything for herself and her children. She put it this way to me. If anything at all were left to the children—her husband's children—questions with regard to administration would crop up. That might lead to other questions and the truth might eventually leak out. So she worked the oracle. They were young and knew nothing of the law. Besides, she had made her own plans. You pretty well know what they were. So I gave in to her."

"You did exactly as she told you?"

"I was not so easy to deal with as you think," replied Adam, with a kind of boast. "I stipulated for a big sum down, and a yearly income. I had done practically all Trefry's engrossing work for years; in fact, as I told you, he left nearly everything to me. I am an expert in handwriting and found no difficulty about the signatures. Why, one was my own."

He ceased speaking for a few seconds and laughed a low, cunning laugh. Then he went on again.

"All the same, I was in a terrible stew when Roger Pendragon died. You see, although Trefry's powers were failing

he would never admit it, and his memory was good enough to know that the will I had drawn up was not according to the one he had prepared. That was why I was frightened. Still, I made provision for that, too."

"What do you mean by that?"

A change had come over Adam Chignoweth during the last few minutes. He was no longer truculent and defiant, rather he seemed to take a pleasure in describing what he regarded as his own cleverness.

"I made provision in this way," he went on. "I knew that Trefry had the original draft, from which the will was copied, stored away in his safe. So I got hold of his keys and by that means secured the draft. I also possessed myself of the will. Then I put the will I had prepared into the place where he kept such documents. Thus you see I had everything my own way," and again he gave a little laugh of satisfaction. "All the same, I was in a fever throughout the whole day of the funeral."

"Why was that?"

"Of course, I knew we were playing a risky game. I had given the original will to that woman and I had put the draft where I knew Trefry couldn't get hold of it. But I was in a fever all the same. What if there should be any hitch anywhere? What if Trefry should openly deny the will which under that woman's supervision I had drawn up? Of course, I knew that the original will was safe—we had seen to that—people don't open coffins after a funeral in order to find a will."

"Whose idea was that?" asked Gwithian.

"It was hers. I urged her to burn it—I wish she had now—but she was as obstinate as a mule. Some women are built that way. She had a kind of suspicion that everything would go wrong if we destroyed it, so she determined to bury it with her husband."

"And she put it in the coffin?"

"We did it together," he whispered. "She hid it under the shroud, hid it under the left arm. Oh! she *is* a woman, I tell you; she even watched while the undertakers screwed on the cover. When that was done she felt safe."

Neither of the two men could help shuddering; to them there was something positively revolting in the act, and they must have shown it in the looks they gave, for Adam went on quickly:

"Oh yes, I see you are shocked; but she was playing for big stakes, and while she couldn't bring herself to burning it

as I wanted her to, the thought that the thing was buried with him kind of soothed her conscience and at the same time fulfilled her purpose. But as I told you, I had a terrible time. What if suspicion should be aroused, what if truth should come to light? That was why I watched like a cat watches a mouse for old Trefry's return after the funeral."

"Well, what happened then?"

"I could see he was terribly upset. There was a look of terror in his eyes, and he could scarcely speak. I saw him go into his own office, while I waited in my room outside. I heard him unlock the safe and presently I knew that he realized the truth. He tried to find the draft of the will in order to confirm his own memory, and on being unable to find it he was in a state of terror. He came out to me and asked me if I knew where it was. Of course, I pretended to know nothing, and hinted to him that his memory had been failing for a long time.

"'But it isn't failing,' he gasped. 'I know the compartment in the safe where I put it, and no one ever goes to that safe but me.'

"Of course, I pretended to comfort him and to offer all sorts of explanations. My God! it was terrible."

Adam lapsed into silence again for a few seconds, then he went on in fear-stricken tones.

"That night he had another stroke," he said, "and he never spoke again. Oh! if he'd only known—only known!"

"Known what?"

"That the draft was in his office the whole time!"

"In his office the whole time?" repeated Gwithian. "Where?"

"In his own writing-desk, the desk at which he had sat for years, the desk at which his successor has been sitting to-day."

"Then why hasn't his successor found it?"

"You may well ask that," replied Adam. "I told you, didn't I, that I knew more about Trefry's business than he knew himself? Yes, and I knew more about his office furniture than he knew himself. I had found out that there was a false bottom in the bottom drawer of his desk, and knowing that he was ignorant of its existence, I put it there. Yes, and I'll warrant that his eldest son, who has sat at his desk for the last ten years, has no suspicions of that false bottom. But it's there, and underneath it is the draft of the thing you've just been reading."

Again Adam laughed at his own cleverness.

"And you told Mrs. Pendragon of this?"

"I told her nothing about the draft," replied Adam cun-

ningly. "If she didn't keep her promise I meant to threaten her with it, but I must say she acted straight. She paid me the sum of money down that she had promised me, and every quarter I have had my allowance. Directly I knew what had happened to Trefry I went to the Hall and told her, and I tell you it was a relief to her. As you know"—and he turned to the doctor—"the reading of the will went off well and no questions were asked. All the same, that woman has lived in hell ever since. For that matter, so have I. Many a night I have woke up in a cold sweat and fancied that the truth had come to light."

"You didn't seem ill at ease when I saw you in your garden at Fowey a few days ago."

"Didn't I? Well, in a way that's true. During the last five years I have felt better, but the first twelve months——! What are you going to do with me? I have told you everything now."

"Not quite," replied Gwithian.

"All that's worth knowing. . . . Oh! if I'd only had my own way the will would have been burnt! Nothing would have become known then. It was *you* who aroused everything to life. I had my suspicions about you directly you began to speak, and when you mentioned young Mr. Tom, those suspicions strengthened. . . . Then when you began to talk about young Roger Pendragon, I knew you had some purpose in coming. I came down here right away and learnt all about you. I discovered that you were friendly with the doctor, too, and I told Mrs. Pendragon that I should never feel safe, and that she would never be safe, until we'd got the will and destroyed it. Presently she got frightened and agreed to what I'd said."

"Was that why you tried to murder me this morning?" asked Gwithian.

"I wish I *had* murdered you!" snarled Adam. "Oh! I've watched you! I knew you had something in your mind; I knew you had been prowling round the church, and I meant to do for you. I thought I had. But even if I had done for you, the doctor was still alive, so I determined to be first. I got hold of Franky Flew and made him as drunk as a lord, and then as soon as it was dark I got to work. It was a ghastly business; how I did it I don't know. I was mad half the time—but I went through with it. Good Lord! wasn't I overjoyed when I saw the metal case! . . . But just then I heard a noise, and I thought Roger Pendragon had come to life again. I got out of the vault—how I don't know—it all seems like a hideous nightmare. Then when I got to the top, before I had time to

realize where I was, I felt the case snatched out of my hand. I fell all in a heap. But I saw *her* flying across the church," and he nodded to Karenza. "For a minute or more I must have been out of my senses. I didn't know what to do—which way to move. But I was desperate! Whether it was man, woman, or devil I must get hold of that case. And then—what a night it was—thundering and lightning as though hell were let loose. Then I heard her cry, but I didn't know what to do. I was frightened and I thought I was going mad. I felt like running away—I *should* have run away, but there was another flash of lightning and I saw her; she was only a few yards from me. I got to her and I tell you I was relieved when I found I had only to deal with flesh and blood; it was only a woman after all, and—and I could quickly master her. . . . But I couldn't. She fought like a wild-cat, she wriggled like an eel. More than once I got hold of it, but only to lose it again—and then—then—you came! Oh! I have been through hell, I tell you. . . . What are you going to do with me?"

Adam had changed his mood by this time. From cunning he had passed to boastfulness, from boastfulness to a kind of horror, and from horror to a truculent defiance.

Again he scrutinized each face closely, especially that of Karenza. He seemed to be wondering what was the best course to adopt. From Gwithian and the doctor he got no comfort, no hope; but as he looked at Karenza's face the look of cunning in his eyes grew.

"I have told you everything now," he said. "I know I have done wrong, but I was in the power of that woman. You will not be hard on me, will you? I am an old man and in the course of nature I have only a few more years to live. And you are young, Miss Pendragon, young and beautiful. You will have pity upon an old man, won't you? . . . Say you'll have pity."

The doctor looked at Gwithian questioningly. Adam's confession had made everything plain, and to all appearance they had obtained all that they desired; but tremendous difficulties faced them. Their position was without precedent, and they still had Mrs. Pendragon to deal with. . . .

A few minutes later, Seccombe, the doctor's man-of-all-work, was summoned into the room. He was a big burly fellow who had served the doctor for many years and was as faithful as a dog.

"You see that man, Seccombe?" said the doctor, nodding to Adam.

"I see 'n, sir."

"Do you know him?"

"Aas, I'd knaw 'n. 'Ee used to be clerk to old Mr. Trefry."

"I want you to look after him. I want you to take him to your bedroom and to keep him there till I come to you. Do you understand?"

"Aas, sir," replied Seccombe stolidly.

"I wouldn't for him to get away for a thousand pounds," said the doctor. "You understand that? It'll only be for a few hours, but during that time I leave him in your charge. Your room over the stable has a good lock to it, and he can't get away without your knowledge. I am trusting you, Seccombe, mind that."

"Aas, Doctor."

"Then take him away."

"Come on, you"; and going to Adam, Seccombe laid his great hand on the old man's coat.

Gwithian and the doctor followed them to the room over the stable, which adjoined the house, and after seeing them safely inside, returned to the surgery again.

CHAPTER XXII

LAWYER TREFRY'S ADVICE

"IT'S been a strange night, Trewithen."

Gwithian did not speak; he had begun to realize something of what their experiences meant, something of the problem which lay before them.

"What is our next move?" asked the doctor presently. "We can't act alone. This is a big thing, man, a terribly big thing!"

Still Gwithian was silent; even to the doctor he dared not tell of the thoughts that were surging in his mind.

"We have got everything in hand, anyhow. We have the true will, and we know where the original draft is. Adam Chignoweth is safe with Seccombe, while that poor girl, Mrs. Richards informs me, is sleeping like a baby. So far, at all events, everything is safe."

"Yes," replied Gwithian, "everything is safe."

"But what's our next move?" persisted the doctor.

"Doesn't that depend on her?"

"In a way it does, of course, but naturally she will act on our advice. There is bound to be a terrible hollabaloo; the whole country will ring with it. We can't help ourselves."

"She shrinks from it," said Gwithian slowly. "You know

what she said before she went to bed. She simply abhors any kind of publicity."

"That may be," replied the doctor, "but she can't help herself. Pendragon's one of the most valuable estates in the county, and—you can see for yourself. In spite of all we have done, that woman's not the one to take it lying down, and she's as cunning as the devil. We shall have to see her shortly and tell her—what we have found out."

"If she doesn't know."

"How can she know?"

"If I've read her aright, she knows everything. She'll have made her plans with Adam Chignoweth. She'll have expected him to return to the Hall with this," and he looked at the will he still held in his hand. "As he hasn't come she will have formed her conclusions. Very likely she's at the church now."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't know what I mean; but a woman like that is capable of anything. She'll have guessed there has been a miscarriage of her plans and very probably have gone to the church to see for herself. I propose we go and have a look."

"No!" cried the doctor, and he gave a kind of shudder, "not again. I am inclined to think I shall be afraid to ever put foot inside that church again. Why, the whole business has been awful, man, awful. Well, we must make our plans. That poor child, splendid as she has been, will be helpless without someone to stand by her."

"Yes, I see that. I wish my head were clearer, Doctor; but I am still suffering from that blow. Oughtn't I to go home now?"

"No!" cried the doctor eagerly, "you must stay here. There is plenty of room, and I daren't be alone without you. That's the plain fact. If what you say is true, and that woman suspects what has taken place, she'll have a score of schemes in her mind by this time. She'll move heaven and earth to best us."

"Yes," replied Gwithian wearily, "I see that. Oh! I wish I could think more clearly, Doctor, but my head's swimming. There, take this thing and lock it in your safe right away; it'll be safer there."

The doctor obeyed him immediately, almost feverishly.

"It'll have to be locked up in the strong-room of some Bank to-morrow," went on Gwithian, still fighting with his weariness. "And there is another thing, Doctor; you must ring up Trefry's office first thing to-morrow morning. Trefry's son still carries on the business of the firm, and therefore is the natural person

to consult. You'd better tell him about the draft of the will too; tell him to bring it here."

"Yes, I'll do that," replied the doctor. "That's good. We shall be getting things in order then."

"Then there's another thing," went on Gwithian. "Had Roger Pendragon any particular friend when he was alive—except you, I mean?"

"Yes, there was General Mountleven, whose estate adjoins Pendragon."

"Is he a decent fellow—clear-headed and all that?"

"He's an old-fashioned country gentleman. He was in the army until lately, and is just the man we need. He is a county magnate, and an honest man."

"That's good. I'd get him here, too, and tell him everything; then we must face that woman."

"You mean that woman Pendragon?"

"Yes, it'll be horrible. I've accepted her hospitality, I've partaken of her salt, I've been friends with her children; but—but it can't be helped. . . . Yes, we must do that. I'll go to sleep now if you don't mind; I can hardly keep my eyes open. And would you mind if I slept on the sofa? I shall be quite comfortable."

"And I'll stay here with you," asserted the doctor. "Heavens! I am afraid to go to my own bedroom. I almost feel afraid of the sound of my own voice. Having that thing here, even although it is locked up in the safe, makes me fearful."

He sank back into his arm-chair as he spoke and stretched out his legs. Gwithian had already fallen asleep.

* * * * *

It seemed to Gwithian that scarcely had he fallen asleep than he was wakened by someone shouting in his ear, and pulling at his shoulder.

"Wake, man, wake!" It was the doctor who was speaking.

At first he could scarcely comprehend where he was, or understand the unfamiliar surroundings.

"Don't you hear? Get up, man; get up; he's gone!"

"What do I care who's gone?" he mumbled. "I want to sleep. Get away, Cradock, and leave me alone."

"I am not Cradock. I am Borlase. Don't you understand? He's gone."

"Who's gone?"

"Adam Chignoweth."

He had become fully conscious by this time, and understood the meaning of the words. Looking, he saw the doctor, clad in

the old dressing-gown in which he had gone to sleep, his hair tousled, his eyes affrighted.

"You mean that Adam has escaped?" he asked. "Why, we saw him into the room ourselves; we heard Seccombe lock the door!"

"I can't explain it; Seccombe can't explain it; but he's gone. Seccombe has only just been with the news."

"What time is it?" asked Gwithian.

"It's just turned seven. Seccombe thinks that Chignoweth mesmerized him, or something of that sort. He's very hazy about it, but he says that he hadn't been alone with Chignoweth more than a few minutes before he felt himself becoming unconscious, and in spite of everything he could do he could not keep himself awake. The fellow is nearly mad. I never knew such a thing to happen before. He's as faithful as a dog, and never turns a hair's-breadth from any orders I give him."

"And Karenza, Miss Pendragon?" asked Gwithian excitedly.

"I don't know. By Jove! I'd forgotten her. Still, nothing can have happened to her."

"Go and inquire at once, man. This—this is uncanny."

A minute later the doctor returned with the news that Karenza was sleeping quietly, and a great burden rolled from Gwithian's heart. In spite of Adam's escape he gave a great laugh. The humour of the situation appealed to him.

"You've been to Seccombe's room?"

"Yes," replied the doctor. "Everything is in order, no disturbance of any sort."

"I will have a look, anyhow; it's so incomprehensible."

A minute later he was standing by the side of the doctor in Seccombe's sleeping compartment. It was a cosy little room over the coach-house, and Seccombe, an unmarried man, had had everything fitted up comfortably. There was not a sign of disturbance anywhere; the bed had not been slept in; the room might have been unoccupied during the night.

Seccombe, on being questioned, answered vaguely. He said he had put the key in his pocket and sat down in an old arm-chair with which the doctor had provided him. It was his intention, he said, to sit up all night. He had told Adam that he might use his bed, and he, according to the doctor's orders, had not meant to go to sleep.

"Did he do anything to you?" asked Gwithian.

"No, he didn't do anything to me," replied the man. "We got talking a few minutes and I was settin' down in the chair

like this. Then he just fixed 'is eyes on me, and said, 'You're going to sleep, Seccombe, you're going to sleep, and you're not going to wake till morning.' He kept on saying this over and over agen, and sure 'nough I did feel myself goin' to sleep. I tried to wake, but I couldn't. After that I didn't knaw no more till this morning just afore seven."

"And then?" asked Gwithian.

"Then?" replied Seccombe—"I looked round and found that 'ee'd gone! The door was unlocked and the kay was gone from my pocket; so I just went and told the doctor right off. 'Ee's the devil, that's what I b'lieve 'ee is."

Both the men asked many questions, but they could get nothing further from him. There was no doubt that Seccombe spoke the truth as far as he knew it.

"What can have become of him?" gasped the doctor when they were alone again.

Gwithian was silent for some time; he was trying to understand what this new departure might mean.

"Ring up Trefry at once," he said; "don't waste a second."

"But he will be in bed."

"Never mind; the servants will be up."

"But what can I say to him?" asked the doctor, who was so excited as to be altogether incapable of connected thought.

"I will do it myself," cried Gwithian impatiently, and a few minutes later he was speaking to the lawyer.

"There, I think I have made it plain to him, and he's coming right away," said Gwithian presently. "By Jove! he was excited. First of all he believed I was an impostor, I think; but he's coming."

"I don't see why you should have been so particular about the draft of the will," said the doctor. "The real will is in my safe. I have just looked at it."

"It may mean a tremendous lot," replied Gwithian. "Remember whom you have to fight against. The woman who is responsible for this business is capable of anything. If Adam told the truth it may be of tremendous value. Probably it will have old Mr. Trefry's notes on it, and if that woman denies the genuineness of the will we took from Adam, we shall have the draft as corroborative evidence."

At that moment Mrs. Richards appeared with the news that breakfast was on the table and that she had already taken a cup of tea to the young lady.

"Is she quite well?" asked Gwithian anxiously.

"Yes, sir," replied the woman. "She talked about wanting to get away at once, otherwise she seems perfectly happy."

"I wonder where Chignoweth is?" exclaimed the doctor as they sat down to breakfast. "He's such a cunning old fox that no one knows what he's doing."

"I think I can hazard a good guess."

"What?"

"He went straight from here to Pendragon Hall, and by this time that woman knows everything. He will have tried to make good terms with her, too, but he won't face the music. My word, it was a good thing we were able to draw his teeth before he got away!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"That we frightened him into confessing. Wily as he is, he can't find a loophole of escape; he's up to the neck. He's broken open a grave and robbed it; we are all witnesses to that, and we frightened him into confessing how he did it. I tell you, we have made the biggest scoop of our lives, and whichever way he turns we have got him."

In an incredibly quick time they heard the sound of a motor outside the house, and young Lawyer Trefry was admitted into the room. Directly Gwithian saw him he felt he was just the man they wanted. He had gathered from Doctor Borlase that the old lawyer, even at his best, was just the ordinary commonplace conveyancing solicitor; that his legal knowledge was very slender, while his mentality was not of a high order. Young Dick Trefry, however, was as keen as a razor. He was but little older than Gwithian and was alive to the finger-tips. He had come into his father's practice immediately after he had passed his examinations, and the old man having died so suddenly, found himself faced by innumerable difficulties. He quickly reduced chaos to order, however, and although many clients left him on account of his youth he succeeded in getting many of them back, besides getting many new ones.

He was a good-looking fellow, clean-shaven and smartly turned out. He appeared what he was: a shrewd, capable, trustworthy, if a somewhat aggressive young man.

"Yes, my name's Trefry," he informed them the moment they were together. "I have come in answer to the telephone message, although I must say I have had a good many doubts on my way. Had it been the first of April I should have thought I was made a fool of. Anyhow, here I am. You're a stranger to me, aren't you?" and he turned towards Gwithian.

"Yes. My name is Gwithian Trewithen."

"Oh, the man who took Cromlech Cottage. I hope you haven't been troubled with any ghosts? But there, you don't want to talk about that."

"No," replied Gwithian. "That is not what I got you here for."

"It was you who spoke to me, then?"

"Yes; it was I. Pardon me telling you now how I came to get mixed up with the matter; that will come out later. Do you do Mrs. Pendragon's legal business?"

"No," replied the lawyer. "My father did everything up to the day of his death; but immediately after the funeral I was informed that her business would be transferred elsewhere. It was a hard knock for me, but I had to face it."

"Then you know nothing of how matters stand now?"

"Nothing; every scrap of paper we had was transferred to Wilkins and Rice."

"Do you know Wilkins and Rice?"

"Yes, pretty well."

"What kind of practice have they? Are they good fellows?"

"Oh, the firm has a good standing. They've a number of respectable clients and their work is of the usual humdrum nature. Why do you ask?"

"I only want to know if they are keen, capable men."

"Capable enough, but not brilliant."

"Then you have none of the Pendragon documents?"

"None at all."

"By the way, did you search that drawer?" he ventured.

"By Jove! yes!" he said. "You were quite right; there was a false bottom to that drawer! I had not the slightest idea of it."

"Did you find that document I mentioned?" and Gwithian spoke anxiously.

"I found this," he said, producing a long sealed envelope.

"Have you opened it?"

"No, I imagined that it was of a private nature and that you wished me to bring it as it is. Is it important?"

Gwithian heaved a sigh of relief. Ever since he had learnt of Adam's escape he had been terribly anxious. Fear came into his heart lest the old man had deceived them. Also he had dreaded whether Adam, by some means or another, had found his way into the lawyer's office and taken the draft.

He almost snatched it from the young lawyer's hands and feverishly tore open the envelope.

"Yes!" he cried, turning to Borlase; "it's all right."

"What's all right?" asked Trefry. "Excuse me, gentlemen, but I am in the dark. I have come here like the furies in obedience to your call, and I want to be assured that everything is straight. Of course, I don't wish to imply anything unpleasant, but you will admit that such a summons is somewhat uncommon. What is this tremendous discovery which you have made, and which you could not detail over the 'phone? I want to know."

"Read the thing you brought," said Gwithian, handing him the document.

The lawyer glanced at it eagerly.

"By Jove!" he said, "it's the draft of the late Roger Pendragon's will. Yes, those are my father's pencil marks."

"Do you remember anything about the will?"

"Remember anything! I should think I do! As Doctor Borlase here knows, it set the whole country-side here talking. But there it was. Everything was done in order, and nothing could be questioned."

"Did your father ever speak to you about making the will?"

"No. My father was a very close man and never talked about his business to his family. Even to me he said very little. As for the will, it was drawn up some considerable time before my father died."

"And he never mentioned any of the details?"

"Not a word."

"Do you remember the day of Mr. Pendragon's funeral?"

"I should think I do. That same night my father had a paralytic stroke after which he never spoke again. It was a day of tragedy in our house. My mother has never been the same woman since."

"Pardon my asking these questions, but I will tell you why presently. Do you remember anything peculiar about your father's behaviour?"

"Nothing except that he was very ill. First of all he went into the office, and then when he came back to the house he seemed like a man death-struck. He said nothing; he was dumb throughout the whole evening. He had the fatal stroke a little later."

"Please read the terms of the draft you hold in your hand," Gwithian said.

The young man obeyed him without question. For the first minute or so he read almost carelessly; but presently his eyes opened wide with wonder; his face became almost bloodless.

"But this is not the will that was read at the funeral!" he gasped. "Why, that Pendragon woman had everything, while the children's names weren't even mentioned! But here——"

He read like a man who could not believe his own eyes.

"Of course, nobody could explain it!" he gasped. "Every one knew that the woman seemed to hold her husband body and soul, but no one could understand him disinheriting his own children. But this—this must have been another will! This must be the draft of a will that was never executed."

For answer Gwithian gave him the will which the doctor had taken out of his safe; it was identical with the draft that Trefry had brought.

"But where did you get hold of this?" cried the lawyer in blank astonishment.

"Yesterday, at this time, it was in the coffin of the late Roger Pendragon."

"What are you talking about? Why, man, you must be mad! . . . Or—is there some devilry at the bottom of it?"

"There has been plenty of devilry at the bottom of it," replied Gwithian. "That was why I was so urgent in my message to you this morning."

A quarter of an hour later Richard Trefry, calm and collected as he usually was, was simply quivering with excitement.

"And all—all this has happened——?"

"Within the last few hours," interposed Gwithian. "Everything took place exactly as I have told you."

"But what explanation do you offer?"

"I offer no explanation. I have simply told you what took place. Strange story, isn't it?"

"Strange—it's unbelievable! You will swear to it?"

"To everything I have told you."

"But how do you explain it?"

"I don't explain it."

"And you saw the figure of Roger Pendragon as you've described it?"

"Exactly," for Gwithian had practically told him the whole story.

At that moment Karenza came into the room, and instinctively understanding the situation she looked eagerly towards the young lawyer.

"Is all well?" she asked presently.

"You have a waterproof case, Miss Pendragon; one that will convince any judge and jury in the land," Trefry informed her.

"Judge and jury?" and there was a look almost of horror in her eyes.

"Yes," replied Trefry with satisfaction. "It will be the biggest case ever known in the West of England. I never met anything like it. It will be a great fight—but you are bound to win."

"A great fight?" she repeated. "Oh! surely not!"

"It must be," and Trefry spoke in tones of satisfaction. "Of course, Mrs. Pendragon will be placed under arrest with as little delay as possible; and then, as she will be sure to defend herself, there will be a great fight. But you needn't fear, Miss Pendragon, everything is well in hand, and although it may be a bit drawn out, it will be bound to come right for you."

The girl looked piteously at Borlase, but Gwithian noticed that she did not give even a glance towards him.

"The first thing we have to do, as it seems to me," went on Trefry, "is to notify the police and get them on to that old rascal Chignoweth's track right away. I remember him of old, and although my father placed great trust in him, I always felt sure he was a rogue. It will give me great joy to see him in a prisoners' dock."

"Is that necessary?" she asked, still looking towards Doctor Borlase.

"I am afraid it is," was the reply.

"But I do not wish it," she said quietly.

"Not wish it, Miss Pendragon! You can't mean that!" and there was chagrin in Dick Trefry's voice. If the girl was going to adopt this attitude, everything would be spoiled at the very outset.

"No, I do not wish it."

"But surely you want him punished?"

"No; I want no one punished."

"What, not the woman who has robbed you of your home and your fortune for all these years?"

Karenza shook her head. "No," she said. "What you have said is true, but I do not believe my father would wish it."

"But—but it's one of the most flagrant cases of forgery and robbery that I ever heard of. It would be criminal to allow them to escape punishment. Besides, it seems to me to be the only possible method of procedure. Warrants for the arrest of these two people ought to be issued at once and——"

"But if I want no warrants for arrest?" cried the girl.

"There still remains your duty to the public," was the lawyer's argument. "You and your brother have been suffering all these

years because of that woman's perfidy—nay, worse than perfidy —crime. It's your duty, Miss Pendragon! Besides, what else can you do?"

"What do you advise?"

"What I said. These two gentlemen have given me full information as to the whole case, and there is not the slightest doubt that by this time that woman will have formulated her schemes for fighting you. We must go at once and arrange for her arrest."

"And then?"

"She will be brought before the local court, and if I understand anything of English law, will be committed for trial."

The girl was silent for a few seconds and seemed to be pondering over what the lawyer had said.

Then she spoke quietly.

"No, I cannot consent to that. I have been thinking over everything and I cannot consent to it except as a last resource."

"You will continue to be robbed if you don't!" Dick Trefry was so eager for a fight, and for the publicity which would be given to him as a consequence, that he was in danger of overstepping the bounds of discretion. "Why, if she sees any signs of weakness on your part she will play with you as a cat plays with a mouse. I have learnt something about that woman since I have been in practice and you simply can't afford to go easy with her. Besides, it would be almost a criminal thing to do."

"I suppose my desires will have some weight?" and in spite of her quiet tones the lawyer felt her rebuke.

"Of course, I am in your hands, Miss Pendragon," he said, "and my only desire is to do what is best for you."

"I am sure of that," she replied hastily. "Then you will forgive me if I seem obstinate. But is there no other way?" and she turned to Doctor Borlase.

"Trewithen and I were talking about it before Mr. Trefry came," replied the doctor.

"Yes. And what conclusion did you come to?" but again she did not look towards Gwithian.

"Trewithen suggested that we get into communication with General Mountleven, who was an old friend of your father, and——"

"Yes, yes, that would be splendid! I know that my father and he were great friends, and you could tell him everything. Oh! if you would do this it would be kind of you. Can you get into communication with General Mountleven at once, Doctor

Borlase? I am ashamed that you should be put to all this trouble for me, but as you see, I am utterly helpless."

"Nonsense, my dear," broke in Doctor Borlase; "your father was my dearest friend, and if I wouldn't do a little thing like this I should——"

Without completing the sentence he went to the telephone and asked for General Mountleven's number.

"I told him nothing," he said a minute later, "but he says he will be over here in an hour."

"And that will be an hour wasted," said Dick Trefry, "an hour more for that woman to formulate her schemes. Excuse me for saying so, Miss Pendragon, but I think you are making a great mistake in not allowing me to arrange for that woman's arrest without further preliminaries."

"Perhaps you are right," said the girl. "I know I am obstinate, but in this case at least I am afraid I must have my own way. Don't you think I am right, Doctor?"

"I'm not a lawyer," replied Borlase, "and, thank Heaven! I've had very little to do with the law. I should imagine that technically speaking Trefry is right; still a matter of courtesy——"

"Courtesy!" broke in the lawyer impulsively. "What has courtesy to do with the matter? This is a case of wholesale robbery, of forgery. That man and that woman have been guilty of one of the most outrageous things I ever heard of, and they are both as slippery as eels and as wily as two devils. Why, think; you believed you had old Chignoweth safe for the night, and yet before morning he's gone. By this time he's told that woman everything, and now, in spite of all you've done, they will be scheming to outwit you. Courtesy indeed! Besides, I doubt whether the law will hold you guiltless in the matter. Adam Chignoweth, evidently at this woman's instigation, has been guilty of sacrilege. He has opened a grave without permission from the Home Secretary, and that is an indictable offence which carries a heavy punishment. For the moment I don't know what punishment, but certainly a very heavy one. That one thing alone makes it our duty to set the law in motion."

"Mr. Trefry," said Gwithian quietly, "I hope you will remember what I told you. I insisted that what was said between us was in the strictest confidence, and that we did not wish one word breathed outside this room."

"Yes, yes, I know," replied the lawyer, "but law is law, and duty is duty."

"And a gentleman's word is a gentleman's word," added

Gwithian. "If it comes to sacrilege, I am afraid that both Doctor Borlase and I are, in intention, equally guilty of it. If old Adam Chignoweth had not opened the grave, we should have. By the way, Borlase, you remember what I told you about that. Hadn't you better see Franky Flew and, if necessary, the Vicar, at once?"

With an exclamation of impatience at his own forgetfulness, the doctor left the room, leaving Karenza alone with the two young men.

"By Jove! it's lucky that Chignoweth forestalled you in opening that vault," laughed Trefry.

"Why?"

"The woman would have had a tremendous case against you else. You would have had to answer the charge of sacrilege, and of breaking the law by exhuming the grave without special permission from the Home Secretary. That would have complicated matters, and there would have been no end of a row. It would have been an interesting case to fight, though."

For the next few minutes the conversation was confined to Karenza and Trefry. Scarcely once did the girl look towards Gwithian; she might be intentionally ignoring his presence. This, of course, Gwithian could not help noticing, and in spite of his feelings towards her he felt somewhat indignant.

"She might at least treat me civilly although she does not care for me," he reflected. "I suppose it is because I made that mad declaration to her the other night."

That was why, sensitive to a degree, he lapsed into silence and took no part in the conversation which ensued.

Scarcely had the doctor returned than General Mountleven was announced.

CHAPTER XXIII

MRS. PENDRAGON AT BAY

GWITHIAN, who knew nothing of him save what Doctor Borlase had told him, saw at a glance that General Mountleven was a fine specimen of the old-fashioned, courteous English gentleman. He had but lately retired from the Army, and had won high renown both for his wisdom and bravery during the Great War. He was quiet of speech, gravely courteous in his manner, especially towards ladies, and one who seldom spoke hastily. General Mountleven had a mind of a very high order, was scrupulously rigid in points of honour and the soul of dis-

cretion. All the same, he was not tied down to conventions, and had been known during the Great War, even in spite of military etiquette, to take the responsibility for more than one unconventional act. To him duty was law, but he gave the word duty a wide interpretation. Friendship was a sacred thing, and loyalty in friendship was something even higher than ordinary codes of honour. He rarely spoke a disparaging word of anyone. When he didn't like people he simply avoided them, but he was always scrupulously polite, and was meticulously rigid in his adherence to what he regarded as the spirit of truth.

"I came over as soon as I could, Borlase," he said on entering. "I hope my delay has not inconvenienced you?"

He glanced round the room as he spoke, and was curious as to what the gathering meant, but by no look or suggestion did he manifest wonderment.

"You must forgive me asking you to come, General," apologized the doctor. "I wouldn't have troubled you had it not been important."

"Don't talk about trouble, my dear fellow. It's always a pleasure to be of service to you."

"I'd better make you known to each other at once," went on the doctor. "This," nodding to Karenza, "is the daughter of your old friend, Roger Pendragon."

"What!" Self-contained as he was, the General could not suppress his astonishment, and it was some time before he gained complete command over himself.

"Yes, it's true."

"What, little Karenza? Why, I remember you as a child, my dear," and he grasped her hand. "As you know, we all wondered——" Then he checked himself. "But I *am* glad to see you. Yes, I remember you perfectly! You haven't altered much—you've only grown from a pretty child to a beautiful young woman. Welcome to your own parish, my dear."

He appeared not to notice her worn clothes or her toil-worn hands.

Karenza felt the tears come into her eyes as she heard his voice. There was something helpful in his presence; it created an atmosphere of confidence.

"But where have you been all these years, my dear?" he went on. "I—I'm afraid I don't understand."

"I don't wonder at that," said the doctor. "Miss Pendragon at present works at St. Elizabeth mine in order to keep herself and her brother alive."

"But no! . . . But there, I forgot . . . and you've been working at St. Elizabeth mine?"

The girl nodded; she dared not trust herself to speak. Her eyes were brimming with tears, and there was a sob in her voice.

"Why didn't you come to me, my dear?" asked the General. "I would have been proud to give you a home, if only for my old friend's sake. And your brother—is he at St. Elizabeth?"

"Roger was wounded in the war," Karenza managed to say. "But—he is very ill. I think sometimes he is getting better; but I don't know."

"But I cannot forgive you for not coming to me," persisted the General. "You knew what friends your father and I were, and——" Then he looked towards the others as if afraid of saying too much.

"Anyhow," he continued, "you must come back to Mountleven with me, and bring your brother as well. My wife will be glad to welcome you. As for my son George . . . By Jove! it's lucky he's home on leave. No, I shall take no excuse; that's settled right away."

"It's because of what has happened to Miss Pendragon that I have asked you to come here this morning," went on the doctor. "This, as you may know, is Mr. Trefry, son of old Mr. Thomas Trefry, whose successor he is."

"Yes, yes, of course, and Trefry was your father's solicitor, Miss Karenza. By Jove!" and there was a far-away look in his eyes as though he remembered the will which caused so much commotion at the time.

"This," went on the doctor, "is Mr. Gwithian Trewithen; he will have a strange story to tell you presently."

"Strange story? Eh? Anyhow, I am pleased to meet you, Mr. Trewithen. You bear good old Cornish names anyhow. Both christian and surname are Cornish to the very marrow. Well now, let me hear this story; I'm getting curious. By the way, has it anything to do with that—that ghastly will which my old friend Roger ought never to have made, and never would have made if he'd been in his senses?"

"It has everything to do with that," replied the doctor.

"Then let's hear it; let's hear it at once."

"You tell it, Trewithen," said Borlase; "you've been the means of the whole thing coming to life."

Thereupon Gwithian told the story. Told it as I have told it here. Naturally he refrained from hinting his love for Karenza, and he said nothing of their most intimate conversations; but

everything that was vital to the strange story of the will he told in detail.

"Then my old friend never made that will!" ejaculated the General, astonished beyond measure. "It was all a lie from beginning to end!"

"Exactly," replied Doctor Borlase.

"I felt it in my bones all the time! I often thought of it away in France while the guns were booming. It wasn't like him. But—but it's criminal, Borlase!"

"Exactly," repeated the doctor.

"And these poor children have all these years been defrauded of their rights, kept out of their home! Why, why—— But I can hardly believe it! It's too horrible for words!"

A silence fell between them for a few seconds, then the General went on. "But are you *sure* of everything, Mr. Trewithen? Did everything happen exactly as you have told?"

"Absolutely."

"Well, it's the strangest story that ever I have heard. Talk about the findings of the Psychical Research Society. Why, man——" And the General started from his chair and walked quickly round the room. "It seems like a miracle," he went on at length, "it seems as though God Almighty specially interfered! And you say it all came as the result of your taking Cromlech Cottage?"

"It would seem so."

"And you've told no one anything, nor taken anyone in your confidence?"

"Outside this room every one is in ignorance, as far as I know," replied Gwithian. "The truth was, I felt rather sensitive about talking."

"I see! I see!" said the General, still with an air of wonderment. "And, of course, what you've told us does away once and for all with the idea of Cromlech Cottage being haunted. And yet it's strange that that old house should have been the beginning of the whole discovery."

"If I might speak," broke in young Trefry, "I would suggest that we are wasting time. Please remember that Adam Chignoweth has escaped, and in all probability that woman knows everything. Oughtn't we to get to work?" Whereupon he retailed what he thought ought to be done and told of his disagreement with Karenza.

"I quite agree with you that we ought to act quickly," replied the General.

"In my judgment," went on Trefry, "the best thing would be for you two magistrates to sign a warrant for her arrest right away, and to communicate with the police without an instant's delay. Still, I am in your hands."

"You will go with us, won't you, General Mountleven?" cried Karenza.

"Of course I will, my dear. I hate having anything to do with that woman, and I don't remember ever having spoken to her since my old friend Pendragon died. Her conduct was abominable even if the will had been genuine, and—and—neither my wife nor I ever called there. But I will go with you at once; we will all go together."

"Yes, and if we are not careful we shall find the bird flown," Dick Trefry grumbled. "Very likely when she saw her game was up, she thought it best to take wings, and then two of the greatest criminals in England will have escaped justice."

"Oh! if she's only done that!" cried Karenza.

"But surely, Miss Pendragon," urged Trefry, "you don't want her to escape the punishment due to her? Think of your own sufferings, and remember that except for what seems to me a mighty stroke of luck, you would still be penniless. Why, even now——"

"I am thinking of my father," broke in the girl. "Do you think I want his name to be bandied about in the newspapers? Do you think he would like this ghastly business to be the theme of every gossiping tongue? Oh! I hope we shall be able to escape publicity."

"But you mean to have your rights, don't you?" urged the lawyer.

"Yes," replied the girl, "if—if only for Roger's sake. Besides," and she spoke lowly, and reverently, "I am sure it is my father's wish."

A few minutes later two cars were moving rapidly towards Pendragon Hall. In the first sat General Mountleven and Karenza, in the second were Gwithian, the doctor, and the lawyer.

Neither of them spoke a word; each felt not only the strangeness, but the uncertainty of their errand. Would Mrs. Pendragon be expecting them? Did she, as Trefry had suggested, know the truth and had she taken flight? If she were at Pendragon Hall, how would she receive them, and what course would she adopt? Of course, there had been many instances of forged wills, but surely there was never one in the annals of English law like this!

At length the General's car drew up to the entrance of Pen-

dragon Hall, while that of the others immediately followed. The man who met the General at the door informed him that Mrs. Pendragon was at home. As far as they could judge, everything was quiet and orderly. The man showed no signs that anything out of the ordinary had taken place; a great peace seemed to reign over the house.

"Will you ask her if she will see General Mountleven?"

"General Mountleven? Certainly, sir," said the man, looking curiously at the others.

"And look here," said Dick Trefry, as if anxious to be in evidence, "is the man Adam Chignoweth here?"

"I beg your pardon, sir."

"You know what I mean well enough; is Adam Chignoweth here?"

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I am not at liberty to give information about my mistress's visitors," and placing the General's card on a tray he walked away with all the dignity of a bishop who had been reprimanding some awkward curates.

A few seconds later the butler returned and asked the General if he would kindly inform him of his business. He added that Mrs. Pendragon was much engaged that morning, and could not see him unless it was about something important.

"Tell her it's very important," replied the General, "and that it is essential for her to see us at once."

The butler solemnly bowed his head again and walked away with stately strides. When he returned he informed them that Mrs. Pendragon would see them in the library, and led the way to that room.

There was no noise or excitement anywhere. The servants whom they happened to see were going quietly about their work; the butler still maintained his dignified calm. The party of five were ushered into the library.

"Will you kindly wait?" said the butler. "Mrs. Pendragon will be here immediately," upon which he left the room.

General Mountleven and the doctor exchanged questioning glances. Karenza, who had not spoken a word since leaving the doctor's house, looked round her like one trying to recognize things that had been once familiar to her, but which she had forgotten. Gwithian's eyes were turned in the direction of the portrait of Roger Pendragon which hung over the mantelpiece, and as he did so he recalled the night on which he had first seen it, recalled the strange happenings which took place after he had returned to Cromlech Cottage.

A minute passed and Mrs. Pendragon did not appear.

"Funny, isn't it?" said the General to the doctor, as the painful seconds passed.

"It's all a plant. She's tricking us. I'll bet my boots she's something up her sleeve." Dick Trefry was so excited that he scarcely knew what he was saying.

"Don't be frightened, my dear," the General said, going to Karenza's side; "you are amongst friends." The girl was almost as pale as death, while her eyes shone with a strange light.

"I am not frightened," she said quietly, looking towards her father's picture.

A minute later Mrs. Pendragon entered the room. If Adam Chignoweth had told her the truth she showed no sign of it. Her control over her features was perfect, and she moved towards the General with quiet grace.

"General Mountleven?" she said, smiling at him. "Pardon my hesitation, but it's so long since you have been here that I could hardly believe my ears when the man brought your name. Not that I do not appreciate your visit. It is very good of you to call on a poor lonely woman. Ah, Mr. Trewithen! naughty man not to come to lunch on Sunday as you promised." The woman acted her part perfectly; neither by word nor look did she show the least sign of what had happened. "Of course, I know Doctor Borlase," she went on; "but I am afraid the others are strangers to me," and she looked steadily at Karenza.

"This young lady," said General Mountleven, "is Miss Karenza Pendragon."

"How interesting! It's so long since she left here that I should not have recognized her. Good morning, my dear." She took a step towards Karenza as she spoke, but the girl moved back with a suggestion of loathing. A hard look came into the woman's eyes at this, and she glanced quickly from one to the other.

"Won't you sit down?" she said. "It is more comfortable to talk sitting than standing."

She might have been trying to gain time. White patches appeared on her cheeks and there was a curious movement of her lips as though she had a difficulty in controlling herself.

"We have come on what will be, to you, a very unpleasant errand," said the General presently.

"Indeed. Nothing terrible, I hope."

"We have come on behalf of Miss Pendragon. We have

discovered that she and her brother are the rightful heirs of the Pendragon estates," said the General quietly.

For a moment the woman's face paled, but only for a moment. She recovered herself immediately and laughed almost pleasantly.

"Is this a jest, General, or do you really mean it?" But although there was a smile on her lips her voice was husky.

"I am not in the habit of playing practical jokes," replied the General, "and I should not have come here except for a very serious purpose."

"Still, I don't understand you."

"Yes, you do," broke in the doctor, who could no longer restrain himself.

"Pardon me, Doctor Borlase."

"I say you understand everything," said the doctor, and his voice was hoarse. "Remember, I was at the reading of the forged will."

"Forged will! What forged will? I really must ask you to explain yourself. Perhaps you, Mr. Trewithen, who have been received to this house as a guest, will explain why you are here this morning."

"I am here to do justice to this young lady and her brother," replied Gwithian.

"And what have you to do with this young lady? If she is Karenza Pendragon, which I very much doubt, she left this house on the day of the funeral, many years ago, and I have never heard of her since. Beyond that I know nothing."

"Mrs. Pendragon," and the General spoke quietly, "we have come here in this way to avoid publicity as long as we can. Had we followed Mr. Trefry's advice we should have brought officers of the law who would have arrested you."

"Arrested me! Really I must ask you to explain yourself. Why in heaven's name should you arrest me?"

"For being here under false pretences," replied the General sternly. "For having, by forgery and fraud, robbed the children of your late husband of their inheritance."

"Forgery! Fraud! Why, General, you must be mad!"

"Come now," broke in Dick Trefry, "this won't do, Mrs. Pendragon. You know all about it, and as the General said, if I had my way, the handcuffs would be on you by this time. Adam Chignoweth has been here and told you all that has taken place."

"Adam Chignoweth! I don't know whom you mean! I never heard of such a person. Surely none of you can be sane in coming here with such a trumped-up story. General, I don't

want to be rude, but I must really ring for a servant to show you out."

"Do you mean to say," asked Dick Trefry, "that you deny having connived with Adam Chignoweth, my father's old managing clerk, to forge a will other than the one he made? Do you deny that the will read at the funeral, making you owner of everything, was forged? Do you deny putting the real will in your husband's coffin?"

"Deny! Deny!" cried the woman, like one trying to understand. "Of course I deny anything so madly insane. I am trying to be patient, but this is too much."

"I told you so," and Dick Trefry turned to the others. "Policemen should have come with a warrant for her arrest. I said so. And it'll have to come to that too."

All pretence of friendliness was cast aside now. The woman, realizing by the set, stern look on her visitors' faces and from what they had said that a battle was imminent, looked defiant.

"Mrs. Pendragon," said the General, "do you persist in denying this?"

"Of course I persist. If you were not an old resident in the district, I should think you were mad. As it is, I can only think of you either as the victims of a hoax, or as people who have come to insult me. Will you leave the house at once or shall I be obliged to ring for my servants?"

"Wait," said the General sternly, "and you will see that we have come to you in kindness."

"Kindness!" she repeated, and there was a look in her face which suggested that she saw a double meaning in his words.

"Yes, kindness. For let me tell you this, Mrs. Pendragon, we know everything; and what is more, we have proof of everything."

"Go on," she said quietly. "I may as well listen to you."

"We have proofs of everything," repeated the General, "and it is for you to choose what course we shall take."

"Choose? I don't understand."

"Yes, choose. Remember, we have discovered everything."

"So you said before. But what have you discovered? What is there to discover?"

"That you, and the man Adam Chignoweth, who years ago was managing clerk to your late husband's solicitor, Mr. Thomas Trefry, knowing that your husband had only left you an annuity and had given the bulk of his property to his two children, forged another will."

"Adam Chignoweth?" she repeated. "Forged another will? As I told you just now, I do not know anyone of that name."

"You, with Adam Chignoweth's help," went on the General as though she had not spoken, "forged another will by which everything was left to you. The forged will was read at the funeral, and you, ever since, have lived here as the owner of Pendragon Hall. The real will you placed in your late husband's coffin."

Every particle of blood had receded from the woman's face as General Mountleven slowly spoke these words. But her eyes were still hard, her lips still compressed.

"Go on with your romance," she said. "You will all have to pay dearly for this; but go on with it."

"Mind we have proofs of everything," continued the General.

"Bring your proofs," challenged the woman.

"Not only was Adam Chignoweth sent to open the coffin and to take the will from it, but we have it in our possession. More than that, he has confessed everything to us."

"It's a lie," the woman gasped. He—he——" She stopped suddenly as if afraid she had said too much.

"He has confessed everything," repeated the General. "Not only has he confessed before witnesses what he did, and your share in it, but he told where the original draft of the will was to be found. That original draft we also possess."

Evidently the woman was calculating. Her eyes flashed from one face to the other as if trying to read what they were thinking, trying to see if there was any loophole of escape. She was still planning, still scheming.

"We have come to offer you your choice," went on the General solemnly.

"Choice!" sneered the woman. "What do you mean by that? Of course, your story is a wild invention, but it would be interesting to hear what you have to say further."

"This is the choice," replied the General. "It is for you to decide whether we shall issue a warrant for your arrest, and place everything in the hands of the law, or whether you will confess your crime and voluntarily give up what you have obtained by forgery."

"And do you think that I'll listen to such an absurd proposal? Why, it's the very epitome of madness!"

"Very well," replied the General, "then you give us no other alternative but to set the law in motion. No, you can't leave this room; at least, you will only leave it under arrest," for she

had taken a step towards the door. "I may add, that but for Miss Pendragon we should have brought policemen with us. It was she who, in spite of the fact that you have robbed her for years, wanted to be merciful."

The woman glanced quickly at Karenza's face. "And if I confess to—— Of course, the whole thing is madness; but if I admit what you say, what then?"

"Miss Pendragon might be merciful; she might not prosecute."

A silence fell upon the little company. Each sat with eyes fixed on the woman whose face was rigid, and still showed little or no sign of emotion.

"Remember, Mrs. Pendragon," went on the General, "that whatever you decide to do will make no difference to the actual outcome. The truth will come to light."

It might seem that she was calculating the issues, wondering whether there was some way out of the terrible position in which she found herself. Perhaps she remembered her children for whom she had done everything; perhaps she was thinking of what defeat meant. She had planned, and schemed, and lied, and sinned to possess Pendragon Hall as her own, and the thought of giving it up was like signing her own death warrant.

"Of course I deny the whole fabrication," she cried. "I laugh at your miserable story. This place is mine, given to me by my late husband's will. As for the man Adam Chignoweth, I know nothing of him. I——" But the words died on her lips.

At that moment there was a noise of a struggle outside the door and a second later the doctor's man-of-all-work, Seccombe, entered, dragging in the struggling form of the man whose name she had just mentioned.

CHAPTER XXIV

MRS. PENDRAGON'S STRUGGLE

"I'VE got'n, Doctor!" panted Seccombe. "I was maazed with meself for lavin' un baat me, and I vowed I'd git'n. I 'eerd what Mr. Trewithen said to 'ee when I told 'ee 'bout it! 'Ee said, ses 'ee, 'ee's gone to Pendragon 'All, 'ee said. That's why I comed 'ere. No, you caan't git away," and he still kept his brawny hand on Adam's collar. "Be quiet, will 'ee! I'll squeeze your uzzle ef you do'ant."

Seccombe was not a quick-witted man, but he was as faithful as a dog. The thought that he had disappointed his master and failed to fulfil his commands had angered him to madness. How he

had discovered Adam Chignoweth, or how he had got hold of him, I do not pretend to know ; but get hold of him he did. Added to this, he had learned of the gathering in the library and had made a dramatic appearance before them, safely holding his prisoner.

" Where shall I put'n, Doctor ? " he went on. " Whatever you tell me I'll do."

The appearance of Adam Chignoweth changed everything. The light of battle went out of the woman's eyes, and she looked craftily around the room. It became known afterwards that Adam had been afraid to tell her the whole of the truth, and that as a consequence Mrs. Pendragon still hoped the charges against her could not be proved.

Evidently Seccombe had handled the old man roughly. He was well-nigh exhausted, and his teeth chattered with fear.

" Mercy ! Mercy ! " he wailed ; " don't you see I'm dying ? " But Seccombe did not loosen his grasp.

" What shall I do with 'n, Doctor ? " he asked again.

No sooner than Seccombe had, at the doctor's orders, released his grip than Adam staggered to Karenza.

" Have mercy upon a poor old man, Miss Pendragon ! " he cried. " You told me you would have mercy if I confessed everything, and I have confessed. You've got everything now, everything ! Besides, it wasn't I—that she-devil there made me do it ! She threatened me with all sorts of unnameable horrors if I wouldn't. . . . Yes, yes, I know I forged the will —and helped her to put the true will in her husband's coffin. But she made me do it. She threatened to make life a hell to me if I didn't, and—and—— Oh, God ! have mercy upon me ! "

" Do you deny everything after that ? " asked the General as he looked steadily at the woman.

" Deny it ! Deny it ! " screamed Adam. " She can't deny anything ! You know you can't," and he turned to the woman out of whose eyes all hope had gone. " You know you can't deny anything. No, it's no use trying to keep anything back now. Ever since that devil there came "—and he pointed to Gwithian—" I felt sure the game was up. I told you he would find out ! But oh, have mercy ! have mercy ! " and again he looked toward Karenza. " I will help you to fight that woman. I will ! I will ! I'll do anything you tell me, *anything* !—only have mercy upon me. Don't let me be dragged before a judge and jury, don't let me stand in a dock !—*don't* let me spend my last hours in prison ! "

The man was in a state of frenzy. All power of resistance had

gone. What hopes he had in escaping from the doctor's house and in coming to Pendragon Hall I do not know; but whatever they were they had all gone. He had become a cowering, fearful wretch ready to do whatever he was bidden.

Mrs. Pendragon's face, ever since Adam had been brought into the room, was a study. Contempt for the old man's cowardice; madness at the thought that he had failed her in her need; fear of what might become of her, together with the shame of exposure and defeat, all manifested themselves. Then suddenly a look of resolution came into her eyes.

"General," she said, "could not you and I go into another room and discuss this matter quietly? Surely some suitable arrangement could be made."

"No," replied the General sternly, upon whose mind Adam's confession had seemingly made no impression. "The choice is still with you. Either you must confess everything or we shall send for the police and arrest you both."

"Confess, woman! *confess*!" screamed Adam. "I am sure they will have mercy; I am sure this young lady will not be hard on you; she has a kind face, and a kind heart. Besides, what's the good of struggling any longer? They *will* have mercy! I am sure they will. Don't you——"

"Silence," snarled the woman. Then she went on quietly: "Suppose I admit what this man says, what then? What will you do with me?"

"I can promise you nothing," replied the General; "it is for the girl you have wronged to answer that. Possibly for the sake of her love for her father she will not want to prosecute you. But mind, I promise nothing. I have no right to."

For some time there was silence in the room, then the woman burst out:

"Anyhow, what I did I did for my children's sake. I have had no joy out of it. For years I have lived in hell, for years I have dreaded this day. Directly I saw that man"—and she looked toward Gwithian—"I saw this hour coming. Why, I don't know; but I did. I haven't had an hour's peace since. I tried to—to—— But never mind that. What do you want to do by me?" and she turned to Karenza. "What do you want me to do?"

Throughout the whole scene the girl had not spoken; but nothing had escaped her. She had noted every word, every movement of the woman who through the years had robbed her of her home, and made her an outcast.

"I shall do nothing," was Karenza's reply. "I may be doing a criminal thing in allowing you to escape, but if you go away from here I shall not try to stop you. If you refuse to go, then the law must take its course."

"And if I go," broke in the woman; "and if I leave you everything—what then?"

"What others may do I do not know," replied Karenza; "what the law may demand I cannot say, but I—I shall do nothing. Only you must give up everything, and you must leave this house."

Evidently the woman was still scheming, still calculating.

"But—but I shall be penniless," she wailed, "and my children will be penniless. What about my husband's will? He—he left me a handsome annuity. Will you contest that?"

Horror, loathing came into Karenza's eyes as she listened. She could not understand the depths of this woman's mind.

"I shall contest nothing," she replied with a shudder.

The woman was silent for a few seconds. "I suppose I ought to thank you for your generosity," she said, and there was a sneer in her voice.

She looked around the room and saw what was in the others' faces.

"After all, what I did I would do again," and she spoke defiantly. "I have been mistress of Pendragon Hall for ten years, you can't rob me of that, anyhow—— No, I don't feel grateful to you. Why should I? I had a *right* to be here, and I stayed. Come to that, I have a right now. Am I not Roger Pendragon's widow? Ought he not to have left me all he possessed? Did he not say when I married him, 'with all my worldly goods I thee endow'? And he ought to have bestowed them on me. That's why I am not grateful to you. As for you, do you think you will be a better mistress of Pendragon Hall than I have been? You, a pale-faced chit of a girl like you!"

For a moment she seemed to dominate the situation. Instead of being a shivering culprit she was still the mistress of the Pendragon Hall, while both Gwithian and the doctor felt like interlopers.

It was then that Adam Chignoweth again caused a change of atmosphere in the room.

"Don't, woman!" he gasped. "You will ruin everything if you go on like that. You will make them angry, and then what will become of us? Fancy us in the dock; fancy us in prison!"

But the woman did not heed him. A new thought seemed to strike her, and turning to the General she said with a smile :

" I am afraid I have forgotten my duties as hostess, General. I will ring for some refreshments ; and of *course* you will all stay to lunch."

* * * * *

That evening Gwithian Trewithen was alone in Cromlech Cottage. For hours he had been there trying to understand the scenes through which he had passed, trying to realize what everything meant. That which he had hoped for had come to pass. Karenza Pendragon was now mistress of Pendragon Hall, while the woman who had reigned there by committing a crime had been dethroned.

It was difficult to realize. Three days before such a thought had seemed too impossible for words ; then, by a series of events which had followed each other in rapid succession, the seemingly impossible had come to pass. Largely through his own action the woman, whose guest he had been, had found the ground dug from beneath her feet. Proof after proof of her perfidy and her crime had been so quickly, and so forcibly, brought against her, that even the pretence of fighting against them became absurd, and when she saw what was in Karenza's mind she had succumbed without a word. On condition that she was allowed forty-eight hours to pack up her personal belongings, she had promised to leave the home over which she had reigned. She had extracted a promise from Karenza that no publicity should be given to the part she had played, and that she should be allowed to leave the neighbourhood without delay or hindrance.

To Gwithian the scenes through which he had passed seemed like some fantastic dream ; scarcely anything was real.

In some senses while rejoicing that justice had been done he could not help the feeling of sadness that came over him. An utter sense of loneliness possessed him. He did not know why but he no longer had any interest in Cromlech Cottage. Two months before everything possessed a romantic charm, and he had determined to solve the mystery which surrounded the house. He had been greatly excited by the events which followed. A new world had been revealed to him. Now everything seemed stale and commonplace.

The sun had set, and he had gone through the form of eating dinner ; but he had scarcely known what he was eating ; his mind was too full of other things. . . .

He suddenly realized that the clock on the mantelpiece was

striking ten; this was immediately followed by the sound of a motor-horn outside; but he took no notice. A minute later Cradock showed Doctor Borlase into the room.

"I thought you would like to see me, Trewithen," remarked the doctor as he entered. "I have just come from Mountleven."

Gwithian looked at him questioningly, but he did not speak.

"Karenza and Roger are both there. Directly we left that woman, the General insisted on driving Karenza to St. Elizabeth and taking Roger away. He telephoned to me afterwards; he was rather anxious about the boy."

"How did you find him?"

"He's a good deal of a wreck," replied the doctor. "I think that with time he may recover, but at present he's hardly fit to be alone."

"Did you talk with him?"

"Oh yes, a good deal. Sometimes he's quite calm and sane, and at others he's scarcely responsible for his actions. Still, I think he'll get better."

"Does he know about to-day?"

"Oh yes. He takes it very calmly, and is eagerly looking forward to living at Pendragon Hall. But as I said, he's scarcely responsible for his actions yet. By Jove! I believe he'd murder that woman if he got hold of her."

A long silence fell between the two men, then the doctor went on.

"A strange business, isn't it? I can't understand it at all. If I read it in a book I should say that the author's imagination had run away with him—and yet, I don't know."

"Don't know what?"

"After all, why should not my old friend use what means he had in his power to do his children justice? What we call death doesn't alter the essential things of life. He loved his children before his body died, why shouldn't he love them after? And why shouldn't he use you as his instrument?"

Gwithian did not speak.

"It's made me believe more than ever," went on the doctor, "that God Almighty is a God of Justice, and that although justice may sometimes be delayed, it's always done.—By the way, the General thinks very highly of you."

"It's very kind of him," replied Gwithian slowly.

"He thinks you've acted splendidly, and that it's through you that the wrong has been righted."

"I couldn't do any other than I did."

"Anyhow, the General thinks you are no end of a fine fellow. Karenza has told him everything."

"Everything?" and Gwithian wondered whether she had told him how a few nights before he had asked her to marry him.

"Yes, all about their coming to this cottage, and what you had said and done. As for Karenza, he's simply fallen in love with her."

"The General has?"

"Yes, and so has Lady Mountleven. As for young George—I shouldn't be surprised if something happened."

"What do you mean by that?"

The doctor laughed.

"What is likely to happen when two such young people are thrown together? They're both young and unmarried, and—— But there, it's too soon to talk of that. Still, the estates join and I feel sure that if it came about the General would be delighted. I wonder where that woman is now?" went on the doctor presently.

"You mean—Mrs. Pendragon?"

"Yes. Heavens, Trewithen! she must have been suffering the torments of the damned since you came!"

"She never showed any signs of it to me."

"No, she wouldn't, but she must have been on the rack the whole time. Then those children of hers, what will they be feeling? I almost pity them."

"So do I," and Gwithian called to mind how, only a few days before, he had been on the point of making a declaration of love to Marjorie Trounce.

"It's not only those who do wrong who suffer, but those who are innocent," went on the doctor. "Still, that woman must have been in hell. They'll be anxious to get away," he added. "You've been very friendly with Marjorie Trounce. Will you call on her?"

Gwithian shook his head.

"How they must all hate you!" burst out the doctor. "They'll think of you as their evil genius; as the one who is responsible for everything. And you had become so friendly with them, too."

"Don't rub it in, Borlase. I wish I'd never gone near the place. And yet—I don't know. It was through my going there that the whole thing came to light."

"By the way," said the doctor, on rising to leave, "I have dealt with the matter of the open vault."

"Have you?" asked Gwithian quietly. "I was going to ask you about that."

"Yes, I have silenced Franky Flew's tongue, and I have dealt with the Vicar."

"Yes?"

"Yes. I have had to take him a little into my confidence; not too much, but a little. Well, it's all right. Moss is a very good fellow, and in the light of what I told him he has promised to be silent. Of course, if the truth came to light thousands of awkward questions would be asked, but I have managed it. The vault is closed again and no one will be the wiser."

When the doctor had gone, Gwithian sat for a long time thinking.

* * * * *

Two days later the parish of Pendragon was in a state of excitement such as never had been known before in the memory of the oldest inhabitant. How the truth first came to light it is not for me to say, but come to light it had. And more than the truth. Flights of imagination were indulged in that would beggar the efforts of the wildest romancer.

First came the news that Mrs. Pendragon and her two children were leaving Pendragon Hall. This was followed on the same day by strange revelations from the butler, who, being discharged from the Hall, spent the night at the Pendragon Arms. This gentleman, under the influence of the libations with which the landlord supplied him, no longer looked and spoke like a bishop. He told the most wonderful story too. He described, with many additions, the coming of General Mountleven, who claimed for the young lady he had brought with him that she was Miss Karenza Pendragon, and that she was the true mistress of the Hall.

He was not very clear in his descriptions, but he told enough to fire the imagination of every loafer in the public-house parlour. He also gave a highly coloured description of the way Seccombe had brought Adam Chignoweth, and what the one-time lawyer's clerk had said.

Then another fact came to light. It went forth that Miss Karenza Pendragon and her brother Roger had for months been living at St. Elizabeth, the former as a mine-girl, and the latter a poor demented creature who depended on his sister's earnings to be kept alive.

All this was enough to keep all the gossips in the neighbourhood working overtime, but it was as nothing compared with

the effect which the story of the will produced. For garbled versions of this story, each more wonderful than the other, were told, and what was more, believed. I will not try to describe them in detail, not because I have no desire, but simply from want of space. The one most generally favoured was that Mr. Roger Pendragon had risen from his grave, come to Cromlech Cottage and told Gwithian Trewithen where the true will was to be found. As a consequence the kitchen of Cromlech Cottage was simply besieged with visitors, and Cradock found himself one of the most popular men in the parish.

The help of Susan Jory was also called in, and Susan was anxious to tell all she knew, together with what she imagined.

Of course many of these stories contradicted others, while others contradicted themselves, which fact caused much heart-searching. But as was generally declared when a few sceptical ones professed doubt, "It cuddn' be oal a pack of lies."

Besides, there were incontrovertible facts which were known to all, and these facts the people fastened on as a hungry dog fastens on a bone.

One fact was that the Pendragons had left Pendragon Hall, and that the great house was empty save for a few servants, who, although they admitted very little, admitted that Mrs. Pendragon and her children had left the Hall never to return again.

There was something else: Miss Karenza Pendragon and her brother Roger were staying with General Mountleven, and the General had been heard to admit that through Gwithian Trewithen a great wrong had been righted, and that the children of his old friend Roger Pendragon would soon occupy their old home again. More than this, Miss Karenza Pendragon had been seen, more than once, motoring and walking with young George Mountleven, who was home on leave from his regiment.

"Will 'em make a match of et, I wonder?" suggested Susan Jory when this item of news was told her.

"Ther's no knawin'," said 'Tilda Truscott, "but of this we may be sartin, the gentry 'ave got their feelin's the same as we 'ave."

Meanwhile, Gwithian stayed on at Cromlech Cottage, saying nothing of what he knew and paying but little heed to what was said to him. The truth was, Gwithian was not only suffering from a reaction from all the excitement through which he had passed; he was also sad and hopeless. It seemed to him that he was no longer an actor in the drama which for months had absorbed his mind, and shaken his life to the very foundations. He had done his utmost to serve Karenza, and yet no sooner had

she obtained her object than she had entirely passed out of his life. Directly after the crucial meeting at Pendragon Hall, when Mrs. Pendragon had, after fighting to the last for her own hand, abandoned all hope, General Mountleven had brought Karenza and Roger to his own house, and made them honoured guests, and from that time Gwithian had neither seen nor heard from the woman he had learnt to love. Not one line had she sent him, not one word of gratitude or appreciation had reached him. It seemed to him that she had purposely tried to shut him out from her life.

There seemed only one explanation for this. Karenza, knowing his feelings as she did, and realizing her inability to return his affections, besides, perhaps, being angry at his declaration, had decided to treat him as a stranger. He called to mind the change in her attitude towards him in the doctor's house after the scene in the church. She had, again and again, deliberately ignored him, and he was hurt. To say the least of it, she might have sent him a kindly message ; she might even have expressed her gratitude. But not a word had passed her lips ; rather she had shunned him as though his presence were unwelcome to her.

In any case, his love was hopeless. If she had remained poor and obscure there might have been hope ; but as the owner of Pendragon Hall it would be impossible to approach her.

And so, day by day passed without his seeing her. The excitement caused by the departure of Mrs. Pendragon and her children died away, and people were talking about the great merrymakings which would take place when the new owner took up her residence ; but he, the tenant of Cromlech Cottage, would not take any part in them.

At the end of the second week in September Gwithian decided to leave Cromlech Cottage. The house no longer attracted him, the district no longer interested him. Day after day he had taken long walks and longer motor rides, but the joy of life had gone.

On the fourteenth of September, on returning from a drive to Gurnard's Head, he saw a motor-car standing outside the garden gate, and on entering the house he saw General Mountleven.

" Your man said you would be home for tea, so I took the liberty of waiting," the General said to him.

" I should have been awfully disappointed if you hadn't," replied Gwithian.

" That's good of you. I had driven young Roger Pendragon to the Hall, and the boy having expressed a great desire to see you, I brought him over. Where he is now I don't know ; I fancy he went into the garden."

"Is he—better?"

"A great deal. I have every hope that he will soon be quite well. So has Borlase. I have had a big mental doctor down from London, too, and he speaks very favourably. Of course, the poor boy has had a ghastly time, and—and—but of course you know the circumstances."

"And Miss Pendragon?" asked Gwithian. "I hope she is well."

"You would hardly know her," laughed the General. "I couldn't have believed that a fortnight would have made such a change. Of course, the child is still in a state of wonderment. The change from St. Elizabeth mine to my house is—but you will understand. Yes, she's as happy as the day is long, and as gay as a lark."

"She must find your house very different from Dorcas Udy's cottage," Gwithian said; he was angry with himself for speaking in such a stilted way, angry that he could not be more natural.

"Yes, of course, the change must be wonderful," assented the General; "and, knowing what we did know, we have done our utmost to make her forget the past. By Jove! the whole thing seems like a miracle, doesn't it?"

Gwithian was silent.

"Still, she's young, and she has the brightness of life all before her. The change has had a wonderful effect upon her, too. George and she have become tremendous pals," added the General.

"Yes?"

"Tremendous pals," repeated the General. "You see, George is only twenty-six, and of a romantic disposition. Of course, he doesn't know the whole story—that we must keep quiet at least for some years—but a lot of it has come to light. George was tremendously moved by it. Indeed," and the General gave a little laugh, "George and she are the best of friends. What wonder? It's natural that young people should be fond of each other, and I am glad to see them happy."

There could be but one interpretation of this, and Gwithian's heart sank like lead. No wonder Karenza had never thought of him. Why should she?

"Ah! there's young Roger coming up the path now. What do you think of him?" asked the General.

Gwithian could hardly believe his own eyes. When he had seen Roger last, his face was drawn and haggard, his clothes were worn and shabby, and he looked a picture of misery. Now

he was well dressed, and the associations of the last fortnight made him look a different creature.

"I have been out in the garden," he said, as Gwithian went out of the house to meet him. "I have been to the level through which I crawled into the house and frightened the man who lived here before you came. I drove him away!" and he laughed inanely.

"Yes, you drove him away," Gwithian said.

"And I was right; he had no business here. But *you* were different. *You* found out the secret, didn't you?"

"You must not say anything about that."

"No, I know; but you did. I felt all along that the secret was here. The voices told me so," he whispered. "They were always saying, 'Go to Cromlech Cottage. Go to Cromlech Cottage.' But it's all right now."

"Have you heard any voices lately?" Gwithian asked.

"No, never since I have been at Mountleven. The pains in my head are nearly gone, too. Aren't I looking well—strong?"

"You are looking much better."

"That's because I am going back to my old home. Karenza is having everything beautifully arranged for our homecoming. It will not be long now. You must come and see us; you will, won't you? I like you. You were too strong for me, but I like you."

"You must come over and look us up, Trewithen," the General said when leaving, half an hour later. "Are you fond of shooting? I can give you some good sport. There is good hunting in the neighbourhood, too. You will be staying for the winter, won't you?"

"Probably not," replied Gwithian. "I expect I shall go back to town soon."

"Ah, that'll be a pity. I had hopes I should see much of you; but no doubt a young fellow like you finds the country lonely."

Another week passed away and Gwithian found not only the country lonely, but almost unbearable. Never once had he seen Karenza, nor had he heard from her. He was told that she was constantly at Pendragon Hall making arrangements for taking up her residence there; but he did not go near the place. He felt he could not. He would feel like an interloper.

He had taken Cromlech Cottage for a year, with an option to purchase at the end of his tenancy; but he decided to go away at once. The place had become hateful to him.

Then the rumour came to him that Karenza and Roger had decided to take up their residence at the Hall at the end of the month. He also heard that a dance was to be given to celebrate the occasion, and that in all probability the engagement of the new mistress of Pendragon Hall and George Mountleven would be announced.

CHAPTER XXV

KARENZA

"I CAN'T do it, I simply *can't*!"

The post had just arrived and Cradock had brought in Gwithian's letters. Amongst them was an invitation to dinner at Pendragon Hall on the following Saturday. It was from young Roger Pendragon and contained only a few lines.

"DEAR MR. TREWITHEN" (it ran),—

"My sister and I hope you will come to dinner next Saturday to meet a few friends at half-past seven. Isn't it a lark? I hope we shall all have jolly times there. We are staying at Mountleven now, but we are going to Pendragon to-morrow. Of course you must come. George Mountleven is going to be there, and I want you to meet him. He's a jolly chap.

"Yours truly,

"ROGER PENDRAGON."

"No, I can't do it, I simply can't!" Gwithian repeated, after again reading the letter.

He went to a writing-desk near the window and took up a pen.

"Three weeks and never a word," he reflected. "I might be the merest outsider. I mightn't have—— Of course, she's fallen in love with young Mountleven; but it's hardly civil. At least, she could have written to me herself. No, I can't go, I simply can't. I expect the engagement will be announced then, and—no I couldn't bear it."

"DEAR MISS PENDRAGON" (he wrote),—

"It was extremely good of your brother to write asking me to dine with you on Saturday next, but as I am leaving Cornwall on Thursday I am unfortunately unable to accept his invitation. As you may know, I never intended my stay here to be permanent, and circumstances compel me to leave at once.

"I should like to say, however, how glad and thankful I am at the course events have taken. You will doubtless receive

many congratulations on coming to your rightful home, and many will rejoice with you that a great wrong has been righted, and that justice has at last triumphed. But be assured of this: no congratulations will be more sincere than mine, and no one will rejoice so much at the happiness which I am sure is in store for you. All that is brightest and best I hope for you, and may both you and your brother know many years of joy amongst your loved ones. Be assured of this, too. Although I cannot be with you in person on the happy occasion mentioned in your brother's letter, I shall be with you in spirit. And I shall always pray that God's sun may shine on you continually.

"Again thanking you,

"I am, yours most sincerely,

"GWITHIAN TREWITHEN."

"What a miserable letter it is," he said, as he read it through. "It's formal, stilted, and badly expressed. Still, what else can I write? I expect she regards this letter of Roger's as an easy way of letting me down. Anyhow, I'll send it. I'll get Susan Jory's boy to take it over to Mountleven at once, and then I shall be sure it's delivered."

No sooner was Jim Jory dispatched on his errand than Gwithian got out his car and took a long drive. It was a warm, and clear, and bright day; but to him it was stifling. He felt he could not breathe. For more than an hour he raced over hill and dale, driving madly up steep hill-sides, and down into deep valleys, without realizing what he was doing. It was a wonder he did not break his neck. He passed through Helston and then headed for the Lizard. Presently he came to a lane which led to Mullion, and arrived there he parked his car.

"After all, why should I care?" he reflected as he looked on the mighty coastline.

He saw the great waves as they hurled themselves on the giant rocks at Mullion; watched the seabirds as they hovered over the seething sea.

"Good God!" he exclaimed, "what a poor little thing man is! Those rocks have been there thousands of years in spite of the breaking of the waves; the sun was shining as brightly ten thousand years ago as it is shining now, and this scene was just as grand then as it is now. Isn't it fatuous that I should go mad because a woman doesn't care for me?"

From Mullion he made his way to Kynance Cove; one of the finest pieces of coast scenery in the world. He could not help

being impressed; could not help being moved by the majestic grandeur amidst which he stood.

"If she be not fair to me,
What care I how fair she be?"

he quoted.

But he *did* care. He might tell himself that nature was laughing at him for a fool; that the scene upon which he gazed told him that it was not for him, a strong man, to spend his thoughts on a girl to whom he was nothing. But he did, and when he returned to Cromlech Cottage again his heart was still sore, and life seemed vain.

He said nothing to Cradock, but the next morning he began to prepare for leaving. He wrote a letter to the agents at Truro and told them that they were at liberty to let the house. He also wrote to Berner's Hotel in London asking them whether they had a room at liberty, hoping all the time that they hadn't.

Then his heart gave a wild leap. He heard a voice which changed everything.

"Is Mr. Trewithen in?"

"Yes, miss," and he knew that Cradock was greatly excited. "A young lady to see you, sir," and he saw Karenza Pendragon framed by the doorway.

He would hardly have known her. Here was no longer a poor, frail, bloodless creature, clad in shabby attire; but a bright child of the morning, full of health and vitality. General Mountleven had been right when he said that she had changed almost beyond recognition. It was a new creature he saw, no longer sad and hopeless, but gladsome as a summer day. A flush had mounted her cheeks, her eyes had stars in them.

"I got your letter," she said shyly. "That's why I came."

He felt a fool. Usually he was a cool-headed man, and seldom thrown off his balance. Now he could not speak a word.

"Of course, there is a mistake," she went on.

"No, there is no mistake, Miss Pendragon." He saw her lips quivering, her hands trembling. She took a step into the room, and then cast her eyes round quickly.

"Of course, I remember this room perfectly," she said. "You—you were so kind to me—here."

He did not speak.

"You were a friend to me when I had no friends," she went on; "you were kind to me when no one else was kind."

"But you have many friends now, Miss Pendragon; many who are kind to you."

"Yes, yes, I know—but haven't you been a little cruel?"

"I—cruel?"

"Yes. I have been expecting every day to hear from you—thinking you might call."

He felt ashamed of himself. He had been waiting to hear from her, when it was his duty to go to her.

"I am a stranger to General Mountleven," he said, "and I was afraid I might intrude. You see, everything is changed."

"No, everything is not changed in reality. You are thinking of how I was dressed when I was here last; and now this. Lady Mountleven chose it for me. Isn't it pretty?"

She spoke with all the artlessness of a child, but there were great depths in her eyes.

"It is very beautiful," he said. "I am not a judge of woman's clothes, but I can, at least, see that. I would like to congratulate you on looking so well."

He felt himself a fool in saying this, but nothing else came to him.

"May I sit down?" she asked, for she had remained standing all the time she had been in the room.

"Forgive me, Miss Pendragon, I had forgotten," and he placed a chair for her.

"Why do you call me Miss Pendragon? I was Karenza not long ago."

"Yes, but everything has changed. You are now Miss Pendragon of Pendragon Hall."

"And you will come on Saturday, won't you? I hope you will. That's why I came."

"No, I cannot come."

"It isn't going to be a dinner-party. There are to be only a few of us. Just the few friends I have."

"No," he said slowly, "I cannot come."

"Why?"

"I told you in my letter."

"Yes, but——" and she looked at him steadily. For a moment something like fear came into her eyes, but it quickly passed away. "I shall be terribly disappointed," she went on. "It was through you that everything has come to me, and—and——" and her lips quivered.

"Please do not think of that, Miss Pendragon. What little I did I did gladly, and no one will rejoice more than I at your happiness."

"But I hoped——" and she stopped suddenly.

"There is a rumour that your engagement is to be announced on Saturday," he found himself saying. "Will it?"

Her cheeks became crimson, and there was a wonderful light in her eyes. "I *hope* so," she said.

"Then how could I come? I could not bear it. Forgive me for paining you, but I couldn't, really. I suppose the man to whom you have given your love will be there?"

"I *hope* so," and she emphasized the word.

Then Gwithian lost control of himself. Up to now he had largely repressed his words, and refrained from speaking what was in his heart; now he was no longer able to do so.

"Do you remember that night when you came to me outside Dorcas Udy's cottage?" he asked.

The girl nodded.

"You remember what I said to you?"

"Yes, you told me you believed that there was no hope for me. You said that it would be impossible for my hopes to be realized."

"Yes, I did. I am glad my fears were wrong."

"But that was not all you said."

"No, it was not all, and I am sorry that I took advantage of your—your disappointment. But I couldn't help myself. I had imagined that I thought of you only with pity; but I knew then that it wasn't pity. I discovered that I loved you like my own life; that you were more to me than all the world. I was wrong to tell you so, and I ask your forgiveness."

"You called me Karenza then, and you asked me to marry you."

"And you refused. You told me it was impossible and you rushed away."

"Yes, I know. How could I do otherwise? I was poor—just a mine-girl, homeless, friendless."

"I wish you were a mine-girl now," he said savagely. "Oh yes, I know I am a brute for saying so, but it's true. Then I could help you, offer you protection. But now—— Please forgive me, Miss Pendragon, but I cannot help myself."

"My good fortune has not changed *me*," she said quietly.

"No, I believe you want to be kind, but really I cannot come to your dinner-party. I should be an ogre at the feast. And really I could not bear it."

"And yet you say you would do anything for my happiness."

"But that would not make you happy. How could it?"

"Would it not make you happy to see me happy? Besides,

I wanted you to be present when my engagement was announced," and she looked at him shyly.

He shook his head. She seemed to be mocking him.

"No, Miss Pendragon. I'm sure you want to be kind. But I cannot come, really I can't."

"I want you to call me Karenza," she said. "It's an old Cornish word, and has a great meaning. Do you know what it is?"

He looked at her wonderingly, and with a fast-beating heart. Could it be possible that——?

"I am true to my name," she said. "That's why I came to you this morning."

"But Karenza means—*love*!" he gasped.

"Yes, and I think it a beautiful name, don't you? Most girls grumble at their names, but I simply love mine," and she looked at him with love-lit eyes.

"But your—your engagement! You said it was to be announced!" he stammered.

"I said, I *hoped* it would—and—and, Gwithian—do you want me to propose to you? I will if you like, but I—I would rather you would do it," and there was a sob in the laugh she gave.

"But—but—— Karenza! My love!"

"Yes, Gwithian."

"Do you mean it—really?"

"I have been telling you, for I don't know how long, that I do. Oh, Gwithian, you *are* dull!"

He caught her in his arms and held her close to him. He seemed afraid to believe.

"May I?" he asked, looking at her parted lips.

"If you will be present at the announcement of my engagement on Saturday!" she replied, with a happy laugh.

* * * * *

I had written more, but I have crossed it out. I had written of their explanations, their hopes, their plans for their future, their happiness. But I found that language failed me, and my pen only mocked me. So I will let my story end here. And surely it is right. For months I have been in Cornwall writing of Karenza, and Karenza means Love.

That sums up everything.

THE END

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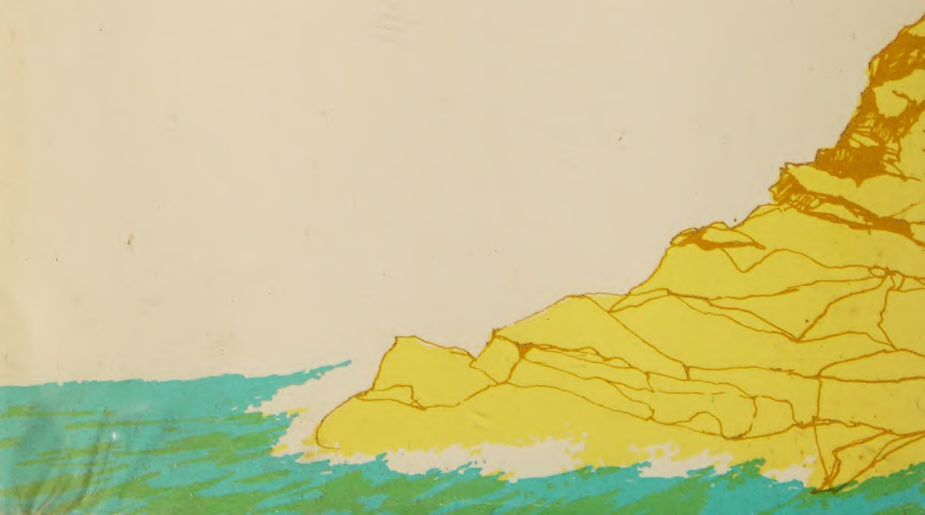
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